



**"A Mark of the Growing Mind is Veneration of Objects"
(Ludwig Wittgenstein)**

Fay Horton Sawyer

Hume Studies Volume XVIII, Number 2 (November, 1992) 315-330.

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/>

“A Mark of the Growing Mind is Veneration of Objects” (Ludwig Wittgenstein)

by Horton Sawyer

Introduction

In book 1 of the *Treatise*,¹ Hume directs his attention to two sets of concepts; one of these sets is what I think of as the “basic epistemological set” and the other as the “basic metaphysical or ontological set.” Except for the idea of personal identity, the *First Inquiry*² addresses the same arrays of concerns. Within the “epistemological set” we find discussions of knowledge, belief, origin of ideas, etc.; within the “metaphysical set” are seen space, time, identity, cause and effect, uniformity of nature, external objects and so on.³

For the first (epistemological) set, Hume constructs a mode of analysis which depends crucially on the *provenance of an idea or concept*. That is, as it does for art historians today, authenticity or truth depends on how the thing in question came into your possession. Hume announces not only that every simple idea depends on and comes from its simple impression, but that the full understanding of a complex idea requires first factoring it into its simple components and then tracing them back to their impressions. Understanding is, so to speak, like displaying the family tree. It turns out that all of the members of the “metaphysical” set have dubious parentage. Even if one grants the accuracy and adequacy of Hume’s factoring, we are left facing his demonstrations that for each metaphysical concept there are at least some elements with no clear ancestry from single impressions. In this way Hume directs our attention to his quest for how such ideas (or such elements within ideas) are ever come by. Why do we attribute identity? How can we assume there is a necessary connection and a power? What can possibly bring us to imagine, even, that anything can be independent of our perceptions? And so on.

All of this is not only at the heart of the Humean enterprise in book 1 of the *Treatise* and the *First Inquiry* but is well-known to anyone even modestly familiar with Hume’s writings. The result of his powerful analyses is that these mysterious, illegitimate elements in the metaphysical concepts are generated within subjects exposed to repeated instances of, for example, pairings in time or place, similar sightings after temporal lapses and so on. The *processes* by which we

construct our categories as well as the elements out of which we make them are important and in these cases were shown to be developmental or time-dependent.⁴ Furthermore, since these processes and these resultant concepts have been shown to have been generated by us, they are uniquely qualified to demonstrate the nature of human nature, which was, after all, the subject of the *Treatise*.⁵

Having reminded ourselves of these extremely general features of Hume's exposition, I want now to isolate and to highlight some particular and peculiar features.

1. The subject upon whose mind or sensibilities paired and repeated events are presumed to impinge and by whose consequent conditioning these otherwise inexplicable concepts can be understood *is always an adult male*.⁶
2. The presenting situation which is presumed to arise and repeat for this adult male *is always hypothetical* and never observed.
3. This man's construction of any one of these concepts (like necessary connection) *is always as his solution to a logical problem, his way-out of a mental awkwardness or unease*.
4. These adult male concept generators and logical problem solvers *never seem to do anything but sit still and look around themselves*.⁷

The fundamental character of my inquiry can be understood as a search for the (presumably deleterious) consequences of the four particular features noted above. Since the lives and experiences of young children are neglected and since acquisition of the basic metaphysical set is always initiated in early childhood, one may well hypothesize that Hume's results will be damaged or skewed. Intuitively, this would seem to be an obvious inference, but proof is needed that in some cases Hume did indeed misconstrue certain basic concepts and that the central factor in his shortfall was his neglect of the *child's* experience of concept development and acquisition. By contrast, his contemporary, Thomas Reid, remarked, "Could we obtain a distinct and full history of all that hath passed in the mind of a child from the beginning of life and sensation, till it grows to the use of reason ... this would be a treasury of natural history, which would probably give more light into the human faculties than all the systems of philosophers about them since the beginning of the world."⁸ Hume was so good at what he did, however, that it has taken me several years of hard work to find any strong evidence that his neglect of children raised difficulties in his understanding of concepts, since he got so much right without benefit of children.

In this paper I shall consider only one of these metaphysical concepts and indeed only one of the factors into which Hume analysed

the concept. The concept in question is that of an *object*, and the factor at issue is *independence*. Thus I shall try to show that Hume's understanding of this factor (independence) is impoverished and distorted and to make plausible that the cause for this flaw was that he not only failed attentively to observe young children, but seems not even to have reflected on the nature of their experiences.

More specifically, I shall argue: (1) that continuity (the continuous existence of external objects across gaps in their being perceived) is earned through various manipulations and *holdings*, rather than created only as the offspring of mental 'inertia' and gaps in visual perception; and (2) that a true idea of the independence of external objects includes emotional aspects of letting-go (the emotional high-ground of releasing) and also the developing realization that there is a world out there which *does not belong to anyone*.

To begin with, I shall bring evidence that Hume did indeed ignore childhood experience and that there were several of his contemporaries as well as predecessors who had not done so; one may then isolate Hume in this regard. Next I shall offer a sketch of Hume's own analysis of the factor of independence in the complex idea of an object and make a proposal about this. The proposal is, roughly, that the independence of Humean objects is quietly subsumed by their turning into things that can be owned⁹ or prized or negotiated and distributed.¹⁰ Afterwards I shall try to show that some of the distortions and impoverishments in Hume's concept of object-independence can indeed be traced to his neglect of children. Moreover, I shall speculate about whether or not Hume's emphasis on the artificiality of the concept of the independence of some objects is another symptom—or more likely an intended expression—of his underlying scepticism about scientific knowledge.¹¹

In the culture of the 1990s, to support a charge that someone "neglected children" carries an implication that the children were harmed. In the case I am bringing, namely that David Hume neglected childhood experiences, none of that of course applies. Harm, if there was any, was done by Hume to himself and to others who assumed that his account of concept acquisition was definitive. However, both cases have at least this much in common: the charge of neglect must be supported by evidence. What kinds of evidence can we look for in Hume's case? Are children often mentioned? How about infants? When they are mentioned, how are they observed or thought about? When development is the central topic, is development *during childhood* noted? When references to children are essentially forced upon him, how does Hume handle them? Are there external mitigating circumstances for his neglect? For instance, was it really the case that

almost no one of his particular time did heed the experiences of early childhood?

References to children are exceedingly rare in any of Hume's writings, even in his letters. And references to infants are, so far as I could discover, non-existent. The most frequent reference to children simply joins their capacities to those of peasants and brutes in order to take a stab at the "learned."¹² This is part of Hume's extended argument that, for example, causal inferences are not the result of learned research but are made almost automatically and naturally. From this, too, comes the conclusion that reason is a kind of wonderful instinct (rather than the arcane property of scholars). One curious inference that *we* could draw from comments of Hume's like the foregoing, is that he was indeed aware that the "basic metaphysical set" of concepts is generally in place in early childhood.¹³

When in the *Treatise* and *First Inquiry* Hume shows the lack of full rational grounding for our ideas of cause, power, person, object, identity and so on, he always follows the destructive analysis with his own solution through developmental acquisition. His analyses require repetitions and the passage of time, but the start of personal time, as it were the "neonate," in Hume's developmental analysis is always the adult male.¹⁴ Passage of time is appealed to for discrete or atomic adults only and gives a plausible account for how *they might* come to construct these various notions. But since most concepts are in place by at least the age of five and many have begun during early infancy, to have offered hypothetical *adult* development of them as in any way sufficient, presupposes that there are no important differences between how a baby or young child engages with her world and how this is done by an adult. This is a deeper and more difficult "neglect of childhood." What I mean here is similar to the points made in recent discussions of ethnicity and gender, for example. Significant factors in the development and experience of a Black or of a Native American or of a woman are missed or distorted if one assumes that these experiences are so like those of a Caucasian male that it makes no difference. It seems fairly obvious that experience (like perception in the *Theatetus*) is a *joint* product of observer and observed. To treat all experiences as *qualitatively* the same is to have forgotten this. A fortiori, to consider the world encountered by the young child as just like that encountered by the adult male is to have failed to look for how concepts and attitudes emerge and grow and change. In this sense, therefore, it is not to have adopted an empirical standpoint.

However hard he may have tried to avoid thoughts of children, sometimes these were thrust upon him. Mme. de Boufleurs once asked Hume to write her a detailed account of his views concerning Rousseau's ideas about education. Hume replied by commenting *only*

on the style of Rousseau's books and said not a word on the substantive topic.¹⁵ Again, an old friend of his, Gilbert Elliott, had sent his two young sons to school in Paris during the time Hume was stationed there. He asked Hume to look in on them and to supervise their education. Nearly the only positive remark on this score that Hume ever made to him was that Latin is essential for purposes of polite society and diplomacy, but Greek is not so.¹⁶ There are a (very) few other scattered remarks. Education is spoken of as a source of prejudice and a kind of second experience (T 117). One may note that this is to view education as something concerning formal schooling only. Such an approach is decidedly not that which Hume adopts when discussing the formation of religious beliefs or of tastes or of social customs. However, my attention in this work is confined to Hume's work in epistemology and metaphysics (not in the passions or faith or society). Finally, it is extraordinary (perhaps it is psychologically symptomatic?)¹⁷ that in his autobiography, *My Own Life*, references to his own childhood are absolutely minimal. I conclude that even where it would have been obviously appropriate and expected, Hume's *mention of children and infants* is almost non-existent.

It has been suggested that no one should take any individual, not even Hume, to task for neglecting childhood, inasmuch as, prior to the mid-nineteenth century, childhood had not been “discovered.”¹⁸ However, most modern researchers in the field reject this thesis.¹⁹ And even the most casual student of western philosophy can cite counter-examples to the thesis that childhood was not at least a thought-about-time prior to the late nineteenth century. The mention of Plato and of Aristotle and of Augustine will do for starters. Furthermore, we have the writings of some of Hume's near-contemporaries, Thomas Reid and John Locke,²⁰ for example, not to mention again Rousseau,²¹ all of whom paid in varying degrees particular and extended heed to the experiences of children.

In summary, then, I think that the charge of neglect has been adequately demonstrated. Not only are young children virtually unmentioned, but “empiricist” models of learning are deployed only on newborn adults. Hume did pay attention to certain features of his own late-childhood history in his famous self-diagnostic letter²² and, as has been remarked, in his discussions of religious and cultural views, of artistic tastes and of our feelings and emotional lives. Is there, perhaps, an implication that the child is emotionally and artistically malleable, but that cognition has a uniform history and is isolated from feelings and from social and familial constraints? This sort of division of labour between cognition and emotion is generally a significant error, *especially insofar as it is applied to young children and infants*. I oscillate among three interpretations of Hume on this: first, he was, for

whatever reasons, simply obtuse about childhood experiences; second, he felt that the real world, the real human world at any rate, is emotional and social, but that the world of science (the cognitive world) was artificial, chimerical and of doubtful authenticity; and third, he was in effect *demonstrating* that one gets no results and only nonsense when one tries to treat cognition independently of emotion.

In this coming part I shall consider first why Hume felt there was any problem about the independence of objects. Then I shall turn to his general solution to this problem which will involve showing not only *how* Hume accounts for our construction of them but *why he thinks we bother doing this at all*. Finally, having manufactured a Humean object which is independent in the Humean sense, I shall draw out some of the consequences of his analysis.

Hume begins his discussion of objects by remarking that he is not doubting *that* there is an external world of objects but only *how we ever come to have such an idea*. I suggest, more or less in passing, that this comment is profoundly ironic, that, in fact, Hume is indeed casting doubt on the existence of the world of independent objects and this is only slightly veiled by his syntax. Compare, "I have no doubt as to the existence of God (or of witches, et al.); I just cannot understand how anyone ever came to know about them or even to think about them." I think Hume *was* truly sceptical about the reality of the world specified by physical science. The humility or modesty which, Hume tells us, is a benign result of scepticism, is part of the tone of Philo's objections to Cleanthes' deployment of the Argument from Design, after all. What was it that Cleanthes was trying to do but to insist that the entire universe is rather like his own house or watch? Cosy even though complicated. It is this cosiness of fit between the needs of our cognitive faculties and the postulated universe of physics which, I suggest, Hume thought at times was just too good to be true.

Now, returning to his well-advertised reasons for astonishment as to how we came to have the idea of an independent and external object (world), Hume's misgivings are grounded in his epistemological axioms. The only thing "present to" us is our perceptions and there is something logically devastating (to the "learned" at least) in the proposition that a *perception* (an impression or an idea) is separable from and not dependent on the perceiver. (He does indeed allow to our purely perceptual world some inner relations, among them that of resemblance.)²³ We have next the absolutely crucial factor of a conscious awareness of "later" or of time-lapse or of "again." After this lapse, the subject notes (perceives) that some set of her perceptions is very nearly identical to (strongly resembles) the set she had before. The impulse to say "the perceptions are the same, are identical," however,

runs afoul of the epistemological axiom that no *two* perceptions can possibly be identical; that is, they cannot be *one* perception. Then why are they so much alike? Why are two different and time-separated experiences thought of as one? The feigned and quasi-solution is to assert that they are so similar as to feel like one *because* they are perceptions of one external thing which is the same and has continued to remain so during the time lapses between perceptions. Thus a pair of pressing problems is solved by a clever invention. The problems were, first, that *two* instances have been thought of as though they were *one* and, second, that *what is internal and dependent has been considered as though external and independent*. And the solution or invention? There is a world external to my perceptions and my perceptions are of it.²⁴

But of course Hume did not consider himself to have solved (even sceptically) the problem posed by our belief in or postulation of a world of external, independent and enduring objects in the manner just sketched, for he immediately calls attention to the fact that not *all* our perceptions are taken to be of external things or to be reliable clues to external reality. For example, even though a pain may well feel very much the same as the one I had yesterday, I am not tempted to locate it as an independent, external object.²⁵

The first property of those impressions to which we do attribute external, continued existence at which Hume glances is their being involuntary. This was one of the properties Descartes, too, had considered. But it is discarded, inasmuch as few of us would attribute voluntariness to our perception of pain and yet we do not externalize *it*. Hume moves next to consider two other properties of those impressions which we do eject, their constancy and their coherence. "My bed and table, my books and papers, present themselves in the same uniform manner, and change not upon account of any interruption in my seeing or perceiving them" (T 194-95). As for coherence, he characterizes it this way:

Bodies often change their position and qualities, ... But ... even in these changes they preserve a *coherence*, and have a regular dependence on each other; which is the foundation of a kind of reasoning from causation, and produces the opinion of their continu'd existence. (T 195)

Hume continues to find difficulties even with this analysis, though, since among those impressions which we do *not* externalize (say the passions), there is also and often an experienced connection and dependence:

but on no occasion is it necessary to suppose, that they have existed and operated, when they were not perceiv'd, in order to preserve the same dependance and connexion, of which we have had experience. The case is not the same with relation to external objects. Those require a continu'd existence, or otherwise lose, in a great measure, the regularity of their operation. (T 195-96)

This is a curious and difficult principle by which to divide perceptions into those we (need to) project and those we do not. It is as though Hume is saying that we can make sense of our inner lives, our feelings and their experienced sequences *without supposing that they are things independent of us*. But we cannot, presumably, *make sense of* the extraordinary resemblance, say, of visual perceptions *without* feigning or supposing that their resemblance is externally caused. As so often, the appeal to "making sense" is eerie. The notion that "neonate adults" feign or pretend that there *is* an external and independent world only in order to gloss over certain contradictions in their perceptual and cognitive lives, could even be seen as the ultimate denial of that world. Or, at least, as a powerful little reservation concerning the actual independence of *anything*. Like the little child who goes along with arbitrary parental and school decrees while carefully guarding the sense that he doesn't really quite believe them (crossing his fingers?), the Humean adult goes along, perhaps, with the fiction of an independent and external world, but, *until he rejoins society* (plays billiards and is merry) privately he doesn't quite believe it either.

Continuing his enterprise of showing how we make sense of our perceptual experiences by inventing entities to solve contradictions and puzzles, Hume next invokes the experiences involved in moving through space, not so much the kinaesthesia of motion itself but the ways in which sights and sounds (and probably those neglected smells) change systematically as one moves and is aware of moving. For example, as I move through space monitoring my visual impressions, the members of one sequence are not only very similar ("resembling"), but the minute changes (say in perceived size or perceived intensity of colour or of detail) fit together, cohere, in a way that can readily be accounted for only if there is an external and enduring object out there towards which I am moving. It is as though Hume is now assuming, at least for the sake of argument, that there can be no purely phenomenal explanation for the smoothness or coherence of a series, since no grounds are offered for supposing that one visual perception *itself* gives rise to or causes another. So either in present sensory sequences or in the memory of them, our problem solver infers some kind of movement of the subject with which this smooth series of visual impressions is

synchronous. We account for these series of perceptions by assuming that they are caused by my walking toward an object through a space which is external to both of us and within which both the object and I, myself, are located.²⁶ "Here then I am naturally led to regard the world, as something real and durable, and as preserving its existence, even when it is no longer present to my perception" (T 197).

But even this solution to a quasi-logical problem is not enough, according to Hume. Conditioning or repeated experiences of the sort just described are, in the Humean explanatory world, sufficient to cause us to expect (with the crucial help of faith in the uniformity of nature!) that another series which begins in the same way (the next time we walk toward that tree) will produce the same visual and kinaesthetic impressions. And in our cognitive quest for an explanation of this resembling sequence of impressions, we have gone beyond experienced resemblance and attributed the continuous existence of the one tree as the *cause* of the similarity of our perceptions. But, surprisingly, Hume moves now to a kind of psycho-physical explanation for this "going beyond" and cites the "inertial" property of the mind, which, when once started on a particular direction, tends to keep rolling (T 237). (The oddity of the imagery here should not distract us from the fact that it is very close to the principles of Gestalt perception.) And again, he calls attention to how the concept of "object" dissolves our uneasiness²⁷ over a contradiction between interruptedness and continuous existence; we "ascrib[e] these contrary qualities to different existences; the *interruption* to perceptions, and the *continuance* to objects" (T 215).

However, it is vital to remark that with such comments Hume returns us once more to the inner world, or to the mind at least. The presumed cause *now* of our seeing "the" tree or "the" sequence as one and the same is *not* the existence of an external and independent object which we are seeing, but, on the contrary, the attributes and neurophysiological tendencies of the mind! That is, he has produced an alternative explanation for similarity and coherence; we do not need to feign an external and independent object after all, for the series may just be driven by (discoverable?) psycho-physical properties of the brain. Hume himself says (T 199) that his reasoning concerning our construction of the concept of an independent object (world) is very abstruse and profound. In fact, his judgement on this is accurate. The analysis of all the stages in the construction of this concept as a solution to a felt uneasiness about a contradiction not only is "difficult and abstruse," but it fails to achieve the kind of full assent that his analysis of the derivation of the idea of, say, power had produced. It is strained and feels excessive.²⁸ Furthermore, *unlike* the expectancy inherent in causal "reasoning," and to which Hume attributes so much *survival*

value, the only utility mentioned in the case of independent-object concepts is the temporary assuagement of "unease" over a felt contradiction!²⁹ Such a use of a concept or idea is an illustration of what we would now call, disparagingly, a rationalization. And, to make matters worse, if we can in fact make sense of our perceptual series *without* feigning independent, external objects, then even that psychic utility fades or vanishes.

It is interesting to compare the status, if you will, of objects in book 1 with their full deployment in books 2 and 3. The formerly hollow objects become in these later books things that can be owned, displayed, distributed, stolen, etc. They are central to the self-image and probably to the idea of a self and, as property, they are the chief ingredients in the "artificial" virtue of justice. The adult world of passion and of trade and warfare is the real world and needs no guarantees of its reality. The passions are, so to speak, self-confirming; one need not go outside them and make dubious inferences in order to feel them and to act upon them. The usefulness of reason in the service of the passions is unquestioned. Objects as things that can be handled and exchanged have value and, value being a concept entirely within the human lived-world constitutes finally for 'objects' a bedrock of meaning.

It is significant that anyone then or now who does observe and think about young children, *begins* her explanation for the concept of the independence of objects within precisely this world of human relations and feelings. The pseudo-thing, the feigned but not-quite-believed-in object, which is the upshot of Hume's analysis in book 1 is absent in theirs.

It is time to summarize the results of this inquiry. It is time, also, to raise and try to answer the original question that drove the research: was there something about the concept of an independent object which Hume failed to grasp in his discussion in book 1, and can this failure plausibly be linked to his neglecting childhood experience?

Among the simpler elements that Hume overlooked was the impression (*sic!*) of continuity which is conveyed—and probably learned!—by actually holding on to something across some interval during which sometimes you are looking at it and sometimes you are not. "From the time that children begin to use their hands, nature directs them to handle everything over and over, to look at it while they handle it, and to put it in various positions and distances from the eye."³⁰ "Through this sequence of play is developed in the child the new feeling, the new perception of the object as something now clasped, grasped and handled and now a freely active opposite something. What the little one has up to this time directly felt so often by the touch of the mother's breast—union and separation—it now perceives

outwardly in an object."³¹ By contrast, in Hume's analysis, the properties of continuity and of external existence are attributed to the "inertial" properties of the mind, in particular, from, "It *looks* the same so far" to, "It will be the same." But the sensory universe of little children is only slightly a visual one and mainly one of touch and kinaesthesia.

In following out this particular shortfall, it is also important to comment on the fact that Hume never noticed that acquiring the concept of an independent object (external world of persons and things) not only takes time, but that it is difficult and, moreover, that the stages of this learning can, at least in part, be observed and studied. Piaget,³² for example, has noted the importance of learning that there is more than one way to re-acquire an object and that learning this is central to learning about object-independence. This is part of the *detachment* of the object from any particular sequence of motions, and that detachment, in turn, is of significance because otherwise (until then) the object would be experienced as only the last stage in a series of stereotyped actions. In fact, this stereotypicality reminds one of the rituals of magic and/or superstition, for both of which the *same sequence* must be gone through in the same order in order to achieve success.

Another part of the learning process is the discovery that other persons *can also pick up "my" object* and, moreover, that "my" object has a name which these other persons know and can say. Accordingly, the move from experiencing objects as private (and therefore as, in important respects, *non-objective*) to experiencing them as parts of a public world was also missed by Hume. Indeed, it is this entry into the public domain of some of what one might otherwise have considered as only my feelings and perceptions that is, I believe, the *crucial* character of what it means to be an object or of what it means to have acquired the concept of an independent object.

The point about the public domain brings up a second, but related, issue which Hume glossed and misunderstood. That is what is the good of forming a concept of an independent object anyway? As he ringingly declares in the final sentences of book 1, if a concept is based neither in reason nor in utility, we should commit it to the flames. The other members of the "metaphysical set" have been shown not to be based in reason, but nevertheless to have specific and considerable utilities. But the only use for forming the concept of an object cited by Hume in book 1 is that it enables one to paper over inconsistencies in one's beliefs and so assuage one's unease. And even this utility is "marginalized" by his suggestion that objects are *not* logically required for a rational explanation of our perceptual experience. Had Hume *contrasted the behaviours and (inferred) cognitive and belief structures of children prior to and after acquiring the full concept of an independent object*, he

would have discerned the extraordinary practical and scientific usefulness of entering into the public world, of using a language, of being a part of a community.

Further, from the word "community," it is important to comment that the external or objective world of infants and young children is *not* so much concerned with stones and balls and blocks as it is *with other people*. This brings to the fore, now, a remark made early in this paper concerning Hume's unexamined assumption that the world of the child is just like that of the adult. But the "cognitive" world of the little child is one of needs and helplessness and emotional (and intra-psychic) *dependence*. It does not require deep research to imagine the tremendous poise a child must have grown into in order to be able to recognize and to *acknowledge* that the mother (or the breast) is "an independent, external object." There are libraries of psychiatric and developmental studies addressing this topic. And although one can hardly fault Hume for having *seen* so little of infants, still during his reflections concerning the "independence" and "externality" of objects, it should have been straightforward for him to have detected (or reflected on) the prominence of particular *persons* in the world of the child, the weeping at their departures, the expectancies and joys at returnings, etc. Any one of these would have evoked his awareness that there are profound emotional elements involved in the process of acquiring the concept of the independence of anything fully "other."

For anyone, this "otherness" of the world remains not only a working principle of science but always a trifle painful and frightening. "[T]he infant who plays with a spool in order to master his separation from his mother ... [shows us that] the acceptance of the distinction between the subject and the object is only gradually and painfully acquired.³³ It is only with the greatest reluctance that man accepts the fact of an inanimate 'nature' that cannot be influenced by his wishes."³⁴

Indiana University Northwest

1. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2d ed., rev., ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1987) (hereafter cited as "T").
2. David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3d ed., rev., ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1975) (hereafter cited as "E").
3. I shall not argue for my proposals that these two sets are indeed basic. Moreover, I shall assume, again without argument, that there is some plausible distinction between epistemology and

metaphysics, despite the formidable and intriguing resonance between them.

4. "How we categorize objects also affects how we perform other cognitive activities. Philosophers interested in the mind as well as many psychologists, however, have paid too little attention to the categorization *process*." William Bechtel, "Studies of Categorization," *Philosophical Psychology* 1, no. 3 (1988).
5. "[D]ans le systeme de l'entendement, l'association est un element constituant, le seul element constituant de la nature humaine." Giles DeLeuze, *Empirisme et Subjectivité* (Paris, 1957), 20.
6. For purposes of this paper I shall not focus at all on the gender issue, but rather on that of age or time of life.
7. Recall R. L. Gregory's observation that "the passive (unmoving) animal remains effectively blind." R. L. Gregory, *Eye and Brain*, 3d ed. (New York, 1978), 211. Also recall that, by contrast, Thomas Reid began his *Essay on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Cambridge, Mass., 1850), by discussing the sense of *smell*.
8. Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*, ed. T. Duggan (Chicago, 1970), 8.
9. One plausible interpretation of the augmented "self" of book 2 of the *Treatise* is that, in his discussion of pride in particular, Hume builds up the self out of those attributes and things to which one lays claim, which one thinks of oneself as owning.
10. It is important to repeat that researchers in the fields of ("normal") development in early childhood and of language as well as concept development are generally agreed that all of the major ways in which we structure the flood of impulses and emotions are pretty much in place by the end of the first year.
11. Along with the faith or principle of the uniformity of nature, the existence of an independent, external world to which we have some cognitive and sensory access must be an axiomatic assumption of physical science. See also F. G. Whelan: "the two most fundamental mental habits—the expectation that the future will resemble the past and the belief that external objects exist when unperceived." F. G. Whelan, *Order and Artifice in Hume's Political Philosophy* (Princeton, 1988), 136.
12. See, for example, "the most ignorant and stupid peasants, nay infants, nay even brute beasts, improve by experience, and learn the qualities of natural objects" (E 39).
13. Hume gives a very puzzling spin to this. For if the concepts of object, cause, personal identity, etc. are in place in early childhood, then why enter into the tortured demonstrations of how they might be acquired and generated in adulthood? And if this adult-acquisition is intended only as an ironic attempt at a

"rational reconstruction" and not a study of the effects on persons and animals of repetition of similar pairs, etc., then, it seems to me, the two sections called "Sceptical Solution of these Doubts" are at best futile.

14. An intriguing illustration of this point is that Hume speaks of an adult "brought on a sudden into this world" (E 28, 42).
15. John Burton, *Life and Correspondence of David Hume* (London, 1846), 2:114.
16. Burton (above, n. 15), 2:280.
17. In his biography of Hume, J. Y. T. Grieg mentions not only that Hume's childhood had been unpleasant, but that he alone changed the spelling of his name from Home to Hume. J. Y. T. Grieg, *David Hume* (New York, 1983), 26.
18. Lloyd de Mause, *The History of Childhood* (New York, 1974), chap. 1.
19. Phillipe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood* (New York, 1972); Iona Opie and Peter Opie, *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (Oxford, 1969); and M. McLaughlin and J. B. Ross, emeritae historians from Vassar College, personal communications.
20. John Locke, *The Educational Writings of John Locke*, ed. J. L. Axtell (Cambridge, 1968).
21. J.-J. Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. B. Foxley (New York, 1974).
22. David Hume, "A Letter to a Physician," 1734, in E. C. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (Austin, 1979), 30-39.
23. As D. W. Hamlyn argued (*Experience and the Growth of Understanding* [London; Boston, 1978], 18-19, 93ff.), resemblance is not so obvious a relation as it was taken to be. He calls our attention to certain features of, say, our perceptions that our parents and our language-culture encourages us to notice, that we are "taught" to pay attention only to *certain* items like size, colour, shape and so on. Recent work extending some of Piaget's ideas about "conservation" calls attention to the same phenomenon. Among little children and indeed among infants there is non-verbal instruction in learning to heed indexicals and also shape-conservation, colour conservation, even use-conservation. For example, Adrien Pinard, *The Conservation of Conservation*, trans. Helga Feider (Chicago, 1981).
24. "The fiction of external and continuous existence ... is a mental construction that the imagination imposes on certain perceptions, thereby fixing the cognitive patterns and creating order in experience, which might otherwise on Hume's perceptualist premises appear as a mere flux." Whelan (above, n. 11), 58.
25. Interestingly, one of the quotations on this does mention children: "children, peasants, and the greatest part of mankind are induc'd

- to attribute objects to some impressions, and deny them to others" (T 193). And at T 234-35, Hume observes that it is only sight and touch which "present" their objects as located at all.
26. The almost metricized precision of these remarks is inappropriate, for all that is needed is some dim consciousness of spatial sensations co-ordinated with sensations of movement and of "coherent" visual impressions. See, for example recent studies by Jennifer Church, "Judgment, Self-Consciousness and Object Independence," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1990); Christopher Peacocke, *Sense and Content* (Oxford, 1983); and Gareth Evans, "Things Without the Mind," in *Collected Papers of Gareth Evans* (Oxford, 1985).
 27. "[A]ny contradiction either to the sentiments or passions gives a sensible uneasiness ... Now there being here an opposition betwixt the notion of the identity of resembling perceptions, and the interruption of their appearances, the mind must be uneasy" (T 205-6).
 28. "Philosophers ... arbitrarily invent a new set of perceptions, ... but 'tis impossible for us distinctly to conceive, objects to be in their nature any thing but exactly the same with perceptions. What then can we look for from this confusion of groundless and extraordinary opinions but error and falsehood?" (T 218).
 29. The most marked utility of the concept of objects, even if one remains, as Hume was, sceptical about the *truth* of the concept (its correspondence with some reality) is that they provide us with a common world, public reference points, central parts of our language, etc. Is it possible that Kant was "awakened" by Hume to see this tremendous utility even though Hume missed it and even though the "noumenal" truth of the concept is not presupposed?
 30. Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind* (above, n. 8), 248.
 31. Friederich Froebel, "The Ball: First Plaything of Childhood," in *The World of the Child*, ed. and intro. Tony Talbot (New York, 1967).
 32. Jean Piaget, *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*, trans. Margaret Cook (New York, 1952); *The Construction of Reality in the Child*, trans. Margaret Cook (New York, 1954); and *The Child's Conception of Physical Causality*, trans. M. Gabain (Peterson, New Jersey, 1960).
 33. It is worth commenting that Martha H. and William J. Pieper argue in their recent and superb book, *Intrapsychic Humanism: An Introduction to a Comprehensive Psychology and Philosophy of Mind* (Chicago, 1990), that pain is neither necessary nor inevitable in the acceptance by a child of the separate reality of her mother (-figure).
 34. Arnold Modell, M.D., *Object Love and Reality* (New York, 1968).