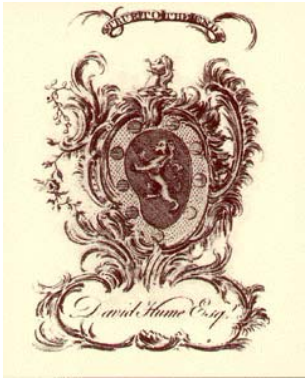

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The Objects of Hume's *Treatise*

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> Objects have no discoverable connexion together; nor is it from any other principle but custom operating upon the imagination, that we can draw any inference from the appearance of one to the existence of another. (T 103)
>
> ...let us remember, that as every idea is deriv'd from a preceding perception, 'tis impossible our idea of a perception, and that of an object or external existence can ever represent what are specifically different from each other. Whatever difference we may suppose betwixt them, 'tis still incomprehensible to us; and we are oblig'd either to conceive an external object merely as a relation without a relative, or to make it the very same with a perception or impression. (T 241)

1.

What does Hume mean by the term 'object'? To those who follow the once standard reading of Hume as the arch subjectivist, 'object' can either be given a "phenomenalist" reading, as the second passage here quoted strongly suggests, or be decried as anomalous and inconsistent. The German idealists read Hume that way: the *Philosophisches Journal*, for example, is full of articles by Fichte (under the pseudonym Anaesidemus) about how wonderful it is that all we know is our own minds, and our own minds as little inner bits. Russell

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read Hume that way, too: see *Enquiry* and *Human Knowledge*. And there is certainly something in this reading: in challenging, and defeating, the dragon Reason, Hume is seeking to reduce all our inferences to their ground in experience. But experience reduces in the last analysis to simple impressions: little colored bits (or little sounds and smells and feels?). On this foundation, and with moderately calm determinations of the passions to guide us, we can stop short of extravagant speculations about immaterial substances and immortal souls and the miseries associated with such ill-grounded beliefs. We can get on with the business of everyday life in the way that reasonable men (not Rationalists or Theologians) rightly like to do.

Yet, as Passmore has classically shown, such a subjective treatment of experience is not the single, unambiguous theme of Hume's *Treatise*.[1] There is surely a real world we are all living in, and are part of. Only we are treating that world here in terms of moral rather than natural philosophy; we are starting with our perceptions, not with the anatomy or physiology that would attempt to describe their causes. The superiority of moral philosophy (in the eighteenth century, and Scottish, sense) consists in the obvious fact that even anatomy or physiology, or more broadly, the mechanical philosophy of Newton, has to be built experimentally (constructed, in the now fashionable jargon) on the ground of those very human perceptions the moral philosopher studies. Sometimes Hume sounds positively Kantian in his self-conscious effort to pay attention only, or primarily, to the appearances of things, without denying that "external" things are the causes of those phenomena. But that is not quite right: the bodily events, movements of the "spirits" and the like, that presumably cause our perceptions can indeed be studied—elsewhere and by others. They are not mysteriously "things-in-themselves" exempt from human investigation. Even in such studies, however, the natural philosopher, if he is wise, will follow the rules of causal reasoning that the moral philosopher has discovered (in T I 3 xv); and these rules, in turn, are rules for connecting impressions and ideas—*not* for connecting impressions and/or ideas with "objects" beyond experience. The latter habit, though unavoidable, is the product of imagination's inventiveness, not of proper causal reasoning. So, again, even when we place ourselves in the "real" world, we acknowledge the priority of moral to natural philosophy.

Sometimes, however, Hume does talk, in the *Treatise*, about "objects" as other than perceptions, and about "external objects," and sometimes he does—though occasionally with apologies—treat perceptions "anatomically," with reference to the movement of the spirits and such like. It seemed to me that in these circumstances it might be of some use to look in detail at Hume's use of the term 'object' in the *Treatise*, with a view to emulating Passmore and looking through Hume's usage at his "intentions" in the work. In the course of this rather niggling investigation, in fact, I have come to believe that there may be a more unified intent in the epistemology of the *Treatise* than

Passmore's argument suggests. (By "epistemology" I mean the methodological and philosophical foundation on which Books II and III as well as Book I depend. Hume announces as much in the prefatory note to Book III.)

The epigrams at the head of this essay may be taken as texts around which I shall build my argument. A dozen, or perhaps even dozens of others, might have done as well—although I do find the second of my pair especially significant. However, what I want to do here is to look, not only at such special statements, but at Hume's uses of 'object' throughout the *Treatise*. I shall first enumerate several senses in which he uses the term and then consider how these uses relate to one another.

Objects in Hume's usage come in three varieties. First, there are objects as targets of attention, what would be called nowadays by some people intentional objects.[2] Second, there are objects as identified with impressions or perceptions—as in the conclusion of my second epigraph.[3] Third, there are objects as non-mental, sometimes, though not always, explicitly referred to as "external objects" (as they are also, for example, in the same epigraph, if only to be dismissed as incomprehensible).[4] In many passages, these three meanings are quite distinct, and distinctive. In others the first and second or sometimes all three are so interwined as to be almost undistinguishable. Our first epigraph may serve for the moment as illustrating, briefly and sketchily, the equivocity of 'object' in some passages; I shall refer as well to some other, more elaborate, cases later.[5] Despite such ambiguities, however, the three uses I have mentioned do occur frequently and recurrently as recognizably distinct.

Looking through the text with these three senses of 'object' in mind, I have tried to count the passages in which they occur. The separate uses are most evident in Book I; in Books II and III a fusion of two or all three is common, although of course in Book II the first sense, of "intentional" object, is specially conspicuous: think of the "object" of pride, for example, as distinct from its cause. The cases I have listed, however, are chiefly from Book I. Indeed, if I am correct in finding a coherence in Hume's family of uses, it is in Book I that it must be established, since that is where the epistemological, or perhaps epistemological-metaphysical, foundation for Hume's moral philosophy is laid down.

So how often does Hume use 'object' in each of the senses I have distinguished? What I have counted, I must confess, are not, for the most part, separate occurrences of the word 'object' but passages in which the term is clearly used in one sense or the other. Since the word sometimes occurs half a dozen times a page, it would be fruitless, or so I thought, to enumerate each occurrence. But of course that makes my attempted quantification very rough and ready. Indeed, sometimes I have noted more than one occurrence of one sense on a given page, where it is not a question of a continuous context.

Using this very informal method, or lack of method, I have found sixty-three cases of the first usage in Book I, not counting its practically standard use in Book II.

Objects as identical with impressions occur eighty-five times. But objects as clearly non-mental turn up one hundred times, in addition to twenty-three occurrences of explicitly "external" objects. I have also noted thirty-four instances in which the meaning of the term is simply ambiguous, or plainly entails more than one of the three meanings at once. This holds also for some of the particular cases I have listed: one, especially the third meaning, often appears to be easily read in another, usually the second sense. Indeed, in some passages a plainly non-mental object soon finds itself explicitly reduced to impressions. For example, at T 33–34, we have eyes directed to objects—a clearly "realistic" way of talking about perception—but on T 34 these "objects" find themselves turning into colored points. I shall return to these connections below. Meantime, however, let us just admit that distinctive senses of 'object' recur in Hume's usage, each of them not only occasionally, but pretty consistently throughout his argument.[6]

2.

First, there are objects of attention, what would nowadays be called intentional objects. Whether Hume held any worked out "theory" of intentionality, in either a Searlean or Husserlian sense, I very much doubt. To be sure, one commentator, C. V. Salmon, in a lengthy and laborious essay originally published in Husserl's *Jahrbuch*, has insisted that in this strand of Hume's argument he was anticipating phenomenology.[7] On that view, everything else is a throwback to a more primitive style of philosophizing. Since in my opinion phenomenology itself is a throwback to an otherwise happily defunct idealism, I find this thesis less than convincing. Nevertheless, when one looks at Hume's text with special attention to the meaning of 'object,' one does indeed find a significant number of passages in which it is clearly what we would now call "intentional objects" that Hume is referring to. Ideas directed to a target, ideas of or about something, certainly occur. True, simple ideas are copies of simple impressions, which they wholly resemble. At first sight, there seems to be no trace of "intentionality" in such a crude conception. Nevertheless, ideas are also presented as *of* their corresponding impressions, which are their objects. After all, David Hume, for example, is the subject as well as the causal original, of his portrait: he is what it is a portrait *of*, its intentional object.

In contrast to ideas, impressions, or rather, impressions of sensation, which are the chief starting point in Book I, ought not, one would think, in Humean terms, to have objects in the intentional sense; they are just original existences, which arise, we know not how (or as moral philosophers know not

how), and cannot be "about" anything else. Yet Hume does sometimes speak, for example, of the "idea or impression of any object," and of "objects" in general as "united in the imagination," where it would be an impression (itself "of an object") that would, through association, evoke a contiguous or resembling idea (T 92). In the context of Hume's argument here, however, where he is busy converting philosophical into natural relations, he is presumably dealing with those lively ideas of imagination or memory, almost equivalent to impressions, that are eventually to be equated with beliefs. These could have intentional objects, as ideas in general do, because though (almost) as vivid as impressions, they are nevertheless ideas.

More generally, however, in the section on scepticism with regard to the senses, Hume refers to "impressions or...their objects" (T 191), as if impressions as such might have objects. But since he is speaking there of my attempted construction of my "body" as an existent distinct from the impressions that make up my immediate perception of it, the "object" in question is just another result of the propensity to feign that produces my idea of permanent entities other than myself. For instance, when I look at my hand, such a permanent object is not what my visual perception is "of." It is of a set of colored points which, out of long settled habit, I believe go on existing when I am looking elsewhere, even when I am not looking at all. And I am even constrained to believe that these colored points belong to some distinct "object" made of flesh and bone. Of course, speaking in that deluded manner, I might say I have an impression *of* my hand; so in that (inevitable but misguided) sense, impressions, too, are "of objects."

There are other passages also in which impressions of sensation appear to have objects in the intentional sense—as, for example at T 11, where senses "change their objects," or in the passage on analogy, where it appears that impressions as well as ideas have objects (T 142). In the former case, however, as in the case of my reference to my own body, Hume may again be speaking of those "external" objects which we are constrained to believe in, and which, so constrained, we believe cause our perceptions. These are not *primarily* intentional objects, even if under the constraint of custom we do so speak of them. In the latter case it is probably the context of belief, with its specially vivid idea-or-impression, that is involved. Similarly, the phrase "the impression or idea of any object," at T 92, belongs to the context of belief: this time in the section "Of the inference from the impression to the idea."[8]

Whatever holds for impressions of sensation, however, impressions of reflection emphatically do have objects in our first sense. As I have already mentioned, this usage is constant in the treatment of the indirect passions. If I am proud of the accomplishments of my children, it is those accomplishments that are the cause of my pride, while the object of that passion is their relation to me. Perhaps we could even manage a similar analysis of the impression of reflexion that produces causal inference: causality is the

(intentional) object of my impression of necessary connection, while the constant conjunction of certain successive impressions and ideas is its cause. In other words, habit generated by constant conjunction is the cause of my feeling of necessary connection; but causality is its object ("cause" here being used in the sense Hume is just assigning to it; he is scrupulous in recognizing that his own analysis of causal inference applies to his own account of it).

Except for the triumphal entry of the impression of necessary connexion in Part 3, Section xiv, however, impressions of reflexion with their characteristic objects are not the chief subject matter of Book I, which treats, Hume says, of ideas, and in particular of those ideas generated by, and about, impressions of sensation. Even in this context objects as targets of attention are conspicuous. In the Introduction, we have "objects concerning which we reason" (T xv), and "objects of curiosity" (T xvi), the latter, however, relating to an impression of reflexion. In Part 1, there are the "order and arrangement" given "to our objects" (T 2); there are the objects of imagination and memory (T 9, T 11); there are objects thought of in relation to the process of abstraction (T 17–18), or objects related to names and ideas (T 19–20). Finally, there is a reference to a "denomination which the mind can apply to any quantity of objects it calls together" (T 30).

In Part 2, there are the "objects of geometry" (T 42), and again in Part 3 (T 72), of mathematicians, "the ideas which are their objects." The other passages in Part 2 also involve other meanings. However, there are twenty-one cases in Part 3. For example, there are "objects of knowledge and certainty" (T 70); "objects about which the mind is employed" (T 99). There is a reference to "thinking on any object" (T 100), or "objects of which we were thinking" (T 106). There are "objects of faith and opinion" (T 120), "objects of belief" (T 122), "objects of poetry" (T 123), an "object of reasoning" (T 170). In Part 4 I have listed twenty-four passages for the intentional use. As elsewhere, some of them are ambiguous, appearing to involve one or both the other senses also; but they stretch from "mind reaches not its objects" (T 185) to "an exact and full survey of an object" (T 274). In both parts, the phrase "view of an object" is puzzling (for example, T 133, 137, 139, 166, 265, 274). 'Object' here might mean just whatever an idea is a view *of*—the intentional sense—or it might be the impression to which some idea is directed (sense two, where 'object' refers to an impression)—or, in some contexts, the "object" of a view appears to be a physical object (sense three). I shall return to this particular question below.

3.

The second sense, in which objects just *are* impressions, needs no such roundabout presentation as I have given for the first meaning. For most readers, I would suppose, the second sense is the canonical one. This is plain

from our second epigraph. Like sensible people, we want to confine our reasoning within the bounds of experience. But experience is composed of a congeries of simple impressions, and whatever we think about, in the last analysis these are our objects. In other words, the objects of our attention are impressions or copies of impressions. This sense of 'object' is clearly what Hume is using in the numerous cases where he speaks of "objects or impressions" as equivalent (for example, at T 19, 37, 39, 41, 637 (the addendum to T 47), 51, 52, and so on up to T 266, where "object" equals "impression."[5] Sticking to experience in our moral philosophy means sticking to impressions and their shadows, ideas, as the items out of which we construct our lives—or people the world. Ideas are *of* "objects"—the first, intentional, sense; those objects are impressions, since in the main, or strictly speaking, it is impressions *to* which our attention is directed. They are the items about which we think, reason, imagine, the items to which we attribute causal connections. In the last analysis, therefore, it is impressions that are our objects, and ideas are their fainter, or somehow less original, copies. Impressions of sensation in particular, the chief "object" of Book I, *are* our objects. Strictly speaking, they do not, in the first sense, have objects. They just are, and furnish the material from which, through the gentle force of association, we people the world. Impressions, and ideas, of reflection in turn arise from them; but they are the foundation on which habit, custom, imagination do their work. Objects in this sense are identical with impressions.

Something should be said here, perhaps, about the relation of Hume's argument to what he calls philosophy, as distinct from the thoughts or beliefs of the "vulgar." Hume decries the double existence invented by philosophers, which in terms of their own philosophy is nothing but two sets of perceptions. Yet he does follow their reduction of experience to "ideas," to impressions and ideas, in his terms —to what we are acquainted with as distinct from what we infer. He is both objecting to the recent philosophical tradition and following it, at least in its first steps, following it, indeed, more radically than his predecessors had had the courage to do. Thus the identification of objects with impressions is conspicuous in Book II, which sets up the material for the inquiry into morals of Book III (for example, T 287, 372, 373, 415). It would be tempting to argue that, as Descartes had used scepticism to lead the mind away from the senses to clear and distinct ideas, so Hume is using Locke-Berkeleyan empiricism—what we might call acquaintance theory—to lead us away from speculation and its accompanying fanaticisms to down-to-earth, common sense thinking and belief. However, the trouble with this analogy is that, while Descartes was never for one moment a sceptic, Hume did very clearly believe in the new way of ideas, with its subjectivizing and atomizing turn. While he rejected either a Lockean or Berkeleyan *Überbau* for his approach to experience, he certainly did take seriously both the stress on sense-perception as the primary basis for knowledge (or for the kinds of inferences

that have to pass for knowledge), and the tendency to atomize perceptions into *minima sensibilia*.[10] Hume is taken to be the arch-empiricist and so he is; indeed, as the critic of double-existence theory he is trying to be more empirical than the empiricists themselves.

4.

It seems surprising, therefore, that when we turn to our third sense of 'object,' the "objective" sense, as it were, we find more cases than of either of the other two: counting the "external objects" cases, 123.[11] Some of these lend themselves to reading in our second sense,[12] but others are more resistant. In Part 1, for instance, we have "...senses changing their objects" (T 11), or the statement: "...motion is nothing but the object itself, consider'd in a certain light" (T 12). Moreover, the passage about globes of marble, although it does not use the word object, is clearly dealing with things rather than impressions. And in brief Part 2, I have noted twenty-one occurrences of our third sense, apart from two cases of "external objects." Some of these, like the passage on T 33–34 that I have already mentioned, move dialectically from the third to the second meaning; but that is not the case with all of them by any means. There are eyes (T 33, 47, 57, 62), there is matter (T 39–40, 56), there are bodies (T 48–49, 57, 59, 64), or solid objects (T58). And when I wheel a burning coal (however I contrive to do it), it is scarcely an impression I am wheeling (T 35). True, that's the way Berkeley talks, too; one could give many of these passages a more reductive reading. Indeed, in two cases Hume corrects the objective appearance of his discourse in the appendix: T 636 for T 58 and T 638–639 for T 64. In the second case he really does seem to be espousing a kind of Kantian realism:

> As long as we confine our speculations to the *appearances* of objects to our senses, without entering into disquisitions concerning their real nature and operations, we are safe from all difficulties, and can never be embarrass'd by any question....If we carry our enquiry beyond the appearances of objects to the senses, I am afraid, that most of our conclusions will be full of scepticism and uncertainty. (T 638–639)

On the other hand, there are occasional vaguely physiological passages, in Part 2 an anatomical one, presented with apologies (T 60–61); and in Part 3 there are some cases where the spirits enter into the account (T 99, 123). These surely cannot be turned into impressions, although we could, circuitously, give a more reductive account of our knowledge of spirits. But that would be rather far-fetched. Certainly, what sound like "external" objects continue to turn up in Parts Three and Four. For example, there are "objects we do not see or feel" (T 74), there is "the object of the impression" (T 84), or the question

"do perceptions arise immediately from the object?" *(loc.cit.)*, and so on. In the section on the probability of causes, there is a remark about separate acts of the mind "[n]ot being united by any common object producing them..." (T 140): that has to be a reference to those (non-mental) objects that somehow cause our perceptions. There are even objects contrasted with perceptions (T 163, 166). And there are still recurrences of the actual phrase "external object," one, for example, where "the mind spreads itself on external objects" (T 167). In short, even if some of them are ambiguous, there are numerous cases in which the term 'object' seems to demand a reading referring to the external or non-mental.[13] I have also listed, it should be added, over thirty cases in which it is simply unclear (to me at least) in which sense Hume is using the term.[14] What *is* clear is that, despite Hume's announced intent to identify objects with impressions or perceptions, an external, extra-impression reference of 'object' is not to be eliminated.

There are two explanations for this situation which I shall identify briefly before going on, in conclusion, to look a little further at some examples of the way in which several meanings are interwoven in a given passage.

First, Hume has declared at the outset that our perceptions are caused by things or events other than themselves; as moral philosophers, we are just not asking about this relation, and as the passage cited above indicates, we'll only get into muddles if we pretend to do so. Natural philosophers may do this if they like, but if they do so (as I suggested earlier), they had better stick to our rules. In these circumstances, however, there is no reason why we cannot talk in a general way about things, or objects, as other than our awareness of them. When it comes to Books II and III, of course we want to talk about ourselves and our fellows, about our actions and our possessions, and we are not going to turn that talk in every phrase or sentence or paragraph into its basis in simple impressions and ideas, even though, as indicated in the passage from the Appendix cited above, we know we could do so (T 638–639). Hume makes this distinction explicitly in the section on personal identity (T I 4 iv), when he contrasts personal identity "as regards our passions or the concern we take in ourselves" with personal identity "as it regards our thought or imagination." It is the latter that he is considering in Book I, but the less philosophical, more insistent context of passions and practice does make itself felt even in the (relatively) theoretical part of the work.

It is worth noticing, by the way, that it is our loves and hates that make us the persons we are, not our perceptions and their fainter copies! Hume's scepticism concerns primarily our cognitive, not our emotional lives—as long as our emotional lives are kept free of superstition and enthusiasm; such a liberation, indeed, is one, if not the chief, intent of the previous course of scepticism. But Hume's hatred of religion is not my theme here.

The second explanation of Hume's use of externalizing language is even more important. Once we have gone through our sceptical cleansing, being

creatures of habit, we not only can, but must, indulge our propensity to feign. We do talk about objects other than our perceptions, about the "objects" we can't help believing constant in the intervals of our perceptions. So Hume, like any other person, is bound to talk in this same way.

I have only one problem with this explanation, but it is a puzzling one. Hume writes in Part 4, Section ii, "Of Scepticism with regard to the senses":

> ...philosophers...change their system, and distinguish, *as we shall do for the future*, betwixt perceptions and objects, of which the former are suppos'd to be interrupted, and perishing, and different at every different return; the latter to be uninterrupted, and to preserve a continu'd existence and identity. (T 211, my emphasis)

Now that's all very well. It works methodologically: Hume has passed through a sceptical crisis and is going on to philosophize in his "careless manner" (T 273). It works for his subject matter also: he is coming to the conclusion of his study of ideas, and is going to move on to impressions of reflexion and to a fuller account of human interests and actions. So the philosophers' change of system, though philosophically unjustified, suits *our* philosopher well enough at this juncture. My problem is only the phrase "for the future": hasn't Hume been talking this way already? Perhaps that's a trivial difficulty, since being human like the rest of us, he is bound to use such language and it's justified (in a way) since after all our impressions *are* caused somehow or other by objects beyond our minds (that's the first explanation). But I wish I had a better interpretation of that "for the future." To contrive it, however, I would have to go back to all the earlier seemingly "objectivizing" passages and reread them—in terms of the identification of objects with impressions. And then I would have to discover that a similar reduction could not be effected in the following Books. But I fear my patience does not reach so far; to paraphrase Hume, I can only hope that others (certainly not myself) upon more mature reflection will reconcile this contradiction.

5.

Meantime—and perhaps with a view to a beginning of such a reconciliation—I want to look at some passages in which Hume himself appears to bring the three distinctive senses of 'object' into something like a systematic relation to one another.

First, there are passages where the usage is ambiguous: 'object' could be taken in two or all of our three ways. My first epigraph may be taken to illustrate this situation. It forms the conclusion of the famous paragraph that begins: "Thus all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation," and continues:

> '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 above 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 can draw any inference from the appearance of one to the existence of another. (T 103)

This paragraph comes from Section viii of Part 3, on the causes of belief. Now in terms of the argument Hume is carefully constructing throughout these very sections, the objects in the case here are an impression (the appearance and a vivid idea to which the imagination carries us, i.e., a belief ([*sc* in] the existence of something). But it is the appearance *of* one object and the existence *of* another that seem to be involved: and that would suggest that we have to do with intentional objects (sense one) whose targets are things other than our perceptions (sense three). Consider the passage just cited (T 103), for example, alongside the expression "those qualities... (of the object) ...which we believe to exist" (T 172, close of T I 3 xiv). Yet as I noted above, intentionality directed to things other than impressions (or ideas) is, or ought to be, just what Humean moral philosophy (in twentieth century terms, Humean philosophy of mind) eliminates.

Another ambiguous use, which I mentioned in passing earlier, is in the expression "view of an object" as it occurs particularly in the section on the probability of causes. Hume has remarked early in the section:

> 'Twould be very happy for men in the conduct of their lives and actions, were the same objects always conjoin'd together, and we had nothing to fear but the mistakes of our own judgment, without having any reason to apprehend the uncertainty of nature. (T 131)

"Objects" here are quite unequivocally "external." On the next page, a watch stopping because of a grain of dust cannot very directly be read as a relation between impressions and ideas. And a few pages later we hear about the gravity of a body, which "encreases or diminishes by the encrease or diminution of its parts" (T 136). Yet the phrase "view of an object," which recurs throughout the section, certainly suggests the intentional use, our sense one, while, as the argument progresses, the same expression, "view of a certain object" or "view of a particular object" (T 137) is carefully set into the context of a process of association of impressions and ideas more susceptible of a reading in terms of sense two. The paragraph running from T 137 through most of T 138 illustrates this tendency, while at the same time retaining both

the intentional aspect and, in its conclusion, its seeming "externalizing" reference. Hume writes:

> Here is almost the same argument in a different light. All our reasonings concerning the probability of causes are founded on the transferring of past to future. The transferring of any past experiment to the future is sufficient to give us a view of the object; whether that experiment be single, or combin'd with others of the same kind; whether it be entire, or oppos'd by others of a contrary kind. Suppose, then, it acquires both these qualities of combination and opposition, it loses not upon that account its former power of presenting a view of the object, but only concurs with and opposes other experiments, that have a like influence. (T 137–138)

Hume goes on to consider what happens when "the view of the object" concurs in repeated experiments; he finds that "similar views run into each other, and unite their forces; so as to produce a stronger and clearer view, than that which arises from any one alone" (T 138). This is clearly standard ideas-and-impressions talk. He then considers what happens when our "experiments" are opposed:

> As to the manner of their *opposition*, 'tis evident, that as the contrary views are incompatible with each other, and 'tis impossible the object can at once exist conformable to both of them, their influence becomes mutually destructive, and the mind is determin'd to the superior only with that force, which remains after substracting the inferior. (T 138)

Now again although the "object" in the case here could be the belief produced by the to-and-fro (in Hume's view) of probable reasoning, it seems more "natural" to take it as something which exists (beyond the mind) one way or the other, not both at once.[15]

Our second epigraph, as we noticed earlier, reduces senses one and three to the restricted sphere of sense two: taken as what an idea represents, an object or external existence must be the very same as a perception or impression. The statement occurs in the section on the immateriality of the soul (T I 4 v); its reductive intent is reinforced in the course of Hume's argument: we are told of "the ideas of objects and perceptions being in every respect the same, only attended with the supposition of a difference, that is unknown and incomprehensible" (T 244). However, if we look at a somewhat wider context, that is, at the whole section, we find an undeniably realistic intent, and the same holds for the next section, on personal identity.

In both these sections, Hume really does seem to be using the sceptical consequences of taking seriously the way of ideas, in order to undermine any

metaphysically and theologically grounded dualism of mind and body. In T I 4 v, if we ignore the rather strained formulation of Hume's argument in terms of Spinoza's alleged atheism, we may say that the point of the whole section is to show that, since anything can produce anything, matter can perfectly well produce thought. The section on personal identity carries forward a closely related theme, based, this time, on the propensity to feign. Quite fictionally, I construct for myself a continuous and distinct existence of what is in the last analysis only "a bundle or collection of different perceptions" (T 252). Here, Hume tells us, if we would learn

> [w]hat...gives us so great a propension to ascribe an identity to...successive perceptions, and to suppose ourselves possest of an invariable and uninterrupted existence thro' the whole course of our lives,...we must take the matter pretty deep, and account for that identity, which we attribute to plants and animals; there being a great analogy betwixt it, and the identity of a self or person. (T 253)

Thus, as in the section on "reason in animals" (T I 3 xvi), or later, in the section on the passions of animals (T II 1 xii), Hume dethrones the pretensions of "reason" to assign us some special place in the world and puts us down here alongside the rest of "creation." True, the rest of the argument on personal identity has more to do with our objectivizing fictions in general than with our ascription of identity in particular to other living things. Yet it certainly puts our self-identification, not just into the context of our perceptions as belonging to some presumptive "ourselves," but of the identities we ascribe, no more, but no less, fictitiously to "things" in general. So when it comes to our impassioned identities, in Books II and III, we can feel pretty comfortable in a solid world of "external objects" and events and characters and institutions, even though in our more "philosophical" moments we "know" we have only invented all of them, including our very selves. For, Hume reminds us in the "Conclusion of this book" (T I 4 vii),

> [a] true sceptic will be diffident of his philosophical doubts, as well as of his philosophical conviction; and will never refuse any innocent satisfaction, which offers itself, upon account of either of them. (T 273)

In short, in the three concluding sections of Book I, our whole epistemological enterprise, with its brilliantly sceptical issue, is put to one side in favor of a more "realistic" approach to the passion-carried interests of our full everyday lives. We can carry on with our hopes and ambitions, although if overheated imaginations threaten to lead us astray, we can return through the scepsis we exercise in our studies, to a cooler—and therefore, as Hume appears to believe—a more benignant temper. In other words, in Books II and III, Hume can

speak as both the vulgar and careless philosophers recommend. But the discipline of sense two has done its work in its sceptical housecleaning.

That seems to me to be the import of Hume's reference to objects in our third, objectivizing sense, or to "external objects." There is always that larger if less philosophically sophisticated surround, from which, somehow or other, we take our perceptions to arise, and to which we always return, either because as non-philosophers we have never left it, or because as sceptical philosophers we nevertheless indulge our inescapable propensity to feign. What we ought not to do, however, is to pretend in metaphysical flights of overheated fancy that we have a "theory" of those external objects. Indeed, as philosophers in the new tradition, the way of ideas, we simply contradict ourselves when we do that: we just construct what, philosophically, we must admit to be only another set of perceptions, and not some "objects" distinct from our perceptions. Thus talk of "objects" in the *Treatise* does indeed, refer to things "out there," though on the philosophical foundation of the reduction of objects to impressions. And for ideas as impressions remembered or imagined, there is an intentional relation to *their* objects, which are objects-as-impressions. Despite the occasional anomaly of reference to "objects of impressions [*sc.* of sensation]," this threefold usage seems to be on the whole pretty systematic and internally consistent. As I suggested earlier, some of the "objects *of* impressions" can also be read into consistency with the whole range of meanings, although I am not wholly confident that this can be done without too much indirection. Perhaps no philosopher uses all his language scrupulously throughout any argument. But I hope I have shown that in general the term 'object' does have a systematic and consistent range of meanings throughout Hume's *Treatise*. And I hope, further and finally, that looking in rather absurd detail at a few of the occurrences of these several uses has shed a little light also on some of the more general themes of that inexhaustible work.

NOTES

I dedicate this essay to my colleague Bill Williams.

1 John Passmore, *Hume's Intentions* (London: Duckworth, 1980).

2 See T xv,xvi, 2, 9, 9, 11, 11, 11, 18, 19-20, 30, 35, 37, 42, 45, 70, 71, 72, 78. 92, 93, 99, 100, 104, 106, 108, 110, 120, 122, 630, 123, 134, 137, 139, 140, 141. 142, 148, 148, 163, 165, 166, 170, 185, 189, 191, 193, 201, 203, 204, 216, 236. 245, 248, 249, 253-5, 258, 259, 260, 262, 263, 265, 271, 272, 274.

3 See T 5, 11, 14, 19, 29, 30, 34, 34-5, 36, 37, 39, 39-40, 41, 43, 47, 637, 51. 52, 638, 55, 56, 56, 56-7, 58, 64, 638, 64-5, 65, 66, 67, 67, 67-8, 68, 71, 79, 82. 84, 628, 86-8, 89, 91, 96, 98, 102, 103, 104, 106, 108, 110, 113, 130, 131, 133. 142, 144, 145, 157, 160, 163, 164, 171, 175, 188, 189, 201, 202, 207, 208, 210. 212, 213, 216, 218, 219, 228, 241, 242-4, 244, 245, 250, 260-1, 265, 266.

4 For 'objects' in the third sense, see T 11, 12, 14, 33-4, 35, 35, 36, 39-40, 42. 47, 47, 48-9, 51, 52, 638, 56, 56-7, 57, 57-8, 58, 59, 60-61, 62, 62-3, 63, 64, 638. 65, 68, 73-4, 74, 75-6, 76-7, 77, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 87, 87-8, 89, 89-90, 90, 93. 94, 99, 100, 101ff, 102, 103, 105, 107, 111, 112, 113, 116, 123, 632, 125, 127. 130, 131, 137, 138, 140, 148, 160, 161, 163-4, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 172, 176. 185, 187, 188, 193, 193, 194, 196, 203, 294, 211, 217, 228, 230, 231, 246, 253. 267, 272.

5 See, for example, such passages as those on T 1, 15, 35, 39-40, 84, 627, 94. 104, 109, 130-1, 135, 137ff., 139, 147, 149, 149–150, 153, 155, 160, 162, 166. 171, 191, 192, 200, 207, 235, 236, 238, 239, 247, 249, 253-5, 265.

6 There are also "realistic" passages in which the term 'object' or 'external object' is not used; see, for example, T 15–16, 25, 27–28, 54, 121, 132, 136.

7 C.V. Salmon, *The Central Problem of Hume's Philosophy* (New York: Garland, 1983, facsimile of Husserl's *Jahrbuch über Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 10 (1929), 229–449.

8 See, however, the passage on T 93, where the object in question, though "intentional," seems undeniably not equivalent to an impression.

9 Consider for example the first case listed: "...no object can appear to the senses; or in other words, no impression can become present to the mind..." (T 19) or "Ideas always represent the objects or impressions..." (T 37).

10 See the account of visual perception at T 56.

11 I have already noted that there are "realistic" passages in which our target term does not occur.

12 T 147 offers a good example of the use of all three senses.

13 See list in note 4 above.

14 See passages listed in note 5.

15 The other occurrences of the expression "view of an object" are rather different: T 265, objects "present to our senses," and T 274, "present view of the object...."