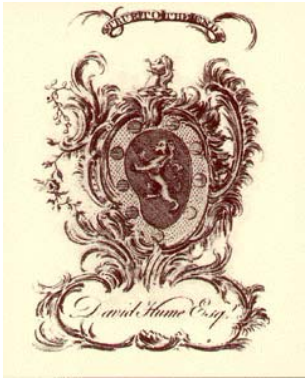

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> ...relation, and that facility of transition, which is essential to it.... (T 99)

With delectable irony, Hume placed feeling at the very core of human understanding. He endeavored to show that the sum total of human intellectual achievement is constructed around a soft core of affection, a kind of pleasure principle of understanding analogous to that reigning in the spheres of passions and morals. In particular, the affections of *vivacity*, in terms of which our notion of real existence (vs. fiction) has to be understood, and *facility* in the passage of thought, in terms of which all relations between distinct perceptions have to be understood, are, for Hume, the principal foundations of all our thought and action. Yet most commentators seem loath to admit that these affections are, in any essential way, operative in his account of human understanding, much less that they are its primary determinants.

This puzzling gulf between author and interpreters comes to a head in the section of *A Treatise of Human Nature* titled, "Of scepticism with regard to reason" (I iv 1). There Hume presents an argument which purportedly demonstrates "that all is uncertain, and that our judgment is not in any thing possest of any measures of truth and falshood." The reasoning is divided into two parts, intended to demonstrate, by "all the rules of logic," that "all knowledge degenerates into probability," and probability undergoes

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"continual diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence." That no one could possibly be convinced by this reasoning is exactly the result Hume expected. For his design was to put his own and rival conceptions of reasoning and belief to the test of being able to explain this failure to convince. By showing that only his affection-based theory of understanding can pass this test, Hume not only deemed his theory vindicated, but also saw in it proof that nothing save the mercurial nature of affection—"the trivial property of the fancy, by which we enter with difficulty into remote views of things, are not able to accompany them with so sensible an impression, as we do those, which are more easy and natural" (T 268)[1]—can break "the force of all sceptical arguments in time," before "they have first subverted all conviction, and have totally destroy'd human reason" (T 187). The conclusion of Hume's examination of human understanding is therefore this: "We have...no choice left but betwixt a false reason and none at all" (T 268).

Hume's analysis of reason in *Treatise* I iv 1 depends on two things: the soundness of the premises of the skeptical argument and their valid implication of its conclusion. Yet this is precisely what no commentator seems ready to allow. For though diagnoses differ widely, there is a consensus that *something* is deeply wrong with the argument. If so, then the fact that the argument fails to convince can be explained in the normal manner: faulty premises or a conclusion they fail to imply. Thus, Hume's strategy of utilizing his theory of understanding to explain a supposedly otherwise inexplicable failure to convince becomes a nonstarter, and *Treatise* I iv 1 is denied its *raison d'être*.

The usual strategy of attempting to boil away the rhetoric and leave only the distillate of Hume's argument has, however, not fared well. When one considers the literature, one cannot fail to be struck by the divergence of views, not only as to where the reasoning goes wrong but even to what is being argued, and what kind of argument it is. This might seem to indicate that Hume's reasoning itself is none too clear. In this paper, therefore, I propose to take a different tack. Rather than plunge directly into the argument, I shall postpone considering it now, and shall focus instead on the principles of knowledge and probability in accordance with which Hume designed it. To this end, I begin by identifying the target of Hume's skeptical argument, and then consider its purpose. Since this will require a lengthy article in its own right, I reserve the examination of the argument of *Treatise* I iv 1 proper for a follow-up paper.

I. The Target of Hume's Skeptical Argument

Commentators are generally agreed that, in the otherwise universal skeptical conflagration of skepticism with regard to reason, one species of rationality escapes unscathed: reason as Hume himself defines it in *Treatise*

I iii.[2] According to this definition, "reason" is nothing more than experience-bred habit, with its locus in associative (idea-relating and -enlivening) imagination, rather than "pure intellect" or "reason." Empirical rationality is thus to be viewed not so much as based on experience and habit as caused by them, so that, "to consider the matter aright, reason is nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls" (T 179), no different in kind from the reasoning of animals (see T I iii 16 and EHU IX). The argument of I iv 1 is then construed as a demonstration intended to show that reason, on any conception other than Hume's own, must inevitably destroy itself, just as the ancient Skeptics argued.[3] Hence, the moral Hume would have us draw from skepticism with regard to reason, presumedly, is that the only alternative to an all-consuming skepticism is to accept that reasoning in all matters of fact and real existence is nothing more than customary association.[4]

Nevertheless, this suggestion, however plausible prima facie, appears to be flatly contradicted by Hume himself when, in the concluding section of the first book of the *Treatise* (I iv 7), he returns to the argument of I iv 1 and tells us what he takes it to have shown:

> [If we decide] to reject all the trivial suggestions of the fancy, and adhere to the understanding, that is, to the general and more establish'd properties of the imagination; even this resolution, if steadily executed, wou'd be dangerous. For I have already shown [in Section 1], that the understanding, when it acts alone, and according to its most general principles, entirely subverts itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition, either in philosophy or common life. We save ourselves from this total scepticism only by means of that trivial property of the fancy, by which we enter with difficulty into remote views of things, are not able to accompany them with so sensible an impression, as we do those, which are more easy and natural. Shall we, then, establish it for a general maxim, that no refin'd or elaborate reasoning is ever to be receiv'd? Consider well the consequences of such a principle. By this means you cut off entirely all science and philosophy: You proceed upon one singular quality of the imagination, and by a parity of reason must embrace all of them: And you expresly contradict yourself; since this maxim must be built on the preceding reasoning, which will be allow'd to be sufficiently refin'd and metaphysical. What party, then, shall we choose among these difficulties? If we embrace this principle, and condemn all refin'd reasoning, we run into the most manifest absurdities. If we reject it in favour of these reasonings, we subvert entirely the human understanding. We have, therefore, no choice left but betwixt a false

> reason and none at all. For my part, I know not what ought to be done in the present case. I can only observe what is commonly done; which is, that this difficulty is seldom or never thought of it; and even where it has once been present to the mind, is quickly forgot, and leaves but a small impression behind it. Very refin'd reflections have little or no influence upon us; and yet we do not, and cannot establish it for a general rule, that they ought not to have any influence; which implies a contradiction. (T 267-268)

Here it seems clear that Hume's skepticism regarding reason is directed not only against models of reason other than Hume's but against his own as well. For how otherwise could our choice be narrowed to one "betwixt a false reason and none at all" if any species of reason at all were exempted as "true"? The trivial property in question cannot correspond to Humean reason, construed as customary association, for he makes quite clear that he is equating the latter with "understanding" and "reason" in the passage under discussion ("the general and more establish'd properties of the imagination"; see also T 10, 92, 140, 225, 265, and 661-662). So, the trivial propensities Hume has in mind are clearly doings of the fancy that either have nothing to do with or are even run contrary to (see T 231 and 266) reason *qua* customary association. There can therefore be no doubt that the choice between a false reason and none at all is between Humean imagination as actuated exclusively by customary association and self-destructive, and the same faculty preserving itself by succumbing to every trivial suggestion, howsoever wayward, contrary, or dangerous.[5]

II. The Structure of *Treatise* I iv 1

Upon realizing that the true target of Hume's skepticism regarding reason is reason however conceived, one may be tempted to view I iv 1 as nothing more than an attempt to debunk reason. Yet, even a cursory examination should suffice to convince us otherwise. Hume was anything but indifferent to the goal of proving his conception of human understanding to be the one best supported by the evidence; he expended enormous energy and effort elaborating and championing his associationist account of reason in all matters of fact and existence. So what, then, are we to make of the suggestion that Hume's sole purpose in erecting this elaborate edifice in *Treatise* I i-iii was merely to raze it to the ground, with one hack of a skeptical ax? It seems incredible that he should have operated in so perverse and facile a manner. Yet if Hume's purpose was not to debunk human reason, why then did he seek to demonstrate that it "is not in *any* thing possest of *any* measures of truth and falshood" (T 183)?

To answer this question, we first need to take account of the progression of ideas in I iv 1. "Of scepticism with regard to reason" divides naturally into three segments plus a concluding apostrophe on reason in general, dogmatic and skeptical alike. The first unfolds the skeptical argument itself (T 180-183). In the second (T 183-184), Hume considers why the argument is incapable of eliciting the slightest credence from anyone, including the skeptic, and reprises the *Treatise* I iii conception of belief as "some sensation or peculiar manner of conception," that is, "the addition of a force and vivacity" to what is otherwise "a simple act of thought" (T 184). The third and most important segment of "scepticism with regard to reason" consists of Hume's response to the demand to show why his own conception of empirical rationality as customary association does not succumb to self-destructive skeptical arguments (T 184-186). He concedes that the skeptical argument does indeed work against his conception of reason just as it does against any other, and so *should* have the effect of destroying belief (knowledge and probability alike). Why does it not actually do so? Because—and this, in my view, is the most important and interesting result of I iv 1—not even experience and custom have greater influence on what we believe (vivid ideas) than facility feeling ("easiness and facility," T 185). Thus, the skeptical argument serves to demonstrate *the primacy of facility affect over anything else in the determination of belief.* Finally, having succeeded in revealing "the true state of the question" (T 186), Hume concludes I iv 1 with the observation that all reasoning in the dogmatic mode—reason as customary association included—begets an opposing skeptical reasoning of equal power, *potentially* capable of wrestling it to a draw. Since uncertainty is the skeptic's real aim (not disbelief, i.e., negative dogmatism), the skeptic must thus be judged the victor—or *would* have to be were it not that "nature breaks the force of all sceptical arguments in time, and keeps them from having any considerable influence on the understanding" (T 187).

III. Hume's Conception of Belief as Vivacity

To appreciate the point of Hume's skepticism with regard to reason as completely and accurately as possible, we must begin by focusing on its second segment: the claim that the force of the skeptical argument could not be broken—that we could not fail to be convinced by it—if belief was not, as Hume supposes, "some sensation or peculiar manner of conception," but were instead "a simple act of thought," with no component of affection (sensation or feeling).[6] What precisely Hume has in mind by belief as "a simple act of thought" is not immediately evident, but this much at least is certain: it is the only position he considered a viable alternative to his view. Elsewhere, Hume was slightly more forthcoming, describing it as the view that belief is "some new idea, such as that of *reality* or *existence*, which we

join to the simple conception of an object" (T 623). This shows that the contrast is between belief as an idea in its own right, with the implication that it is an internal affair of understanding alone without assistance from affection, and belief as a feeling or sensation, hence a joint affair of thought and affection. If so, then the view Hume rejected is one that, by virtue of making belief a strictly intellectual matter, must subject it to all the rules of thought (logic),[7] including, presumably, the principle of contradiction. Since the very same "rules of logic" enabled Hume's skeptical argument to imply "a continual diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence" (T 183), we thus seem safe in inferring that, for him, the crucial factor distinguishing the fate of the two opposing conceptions of belief in the face of skepticism is that belief, construed as thought, is subject to rules of logic, whereas belief construed as feeling is not.

Proceeding on this assumption, the anti-Humean is committed to the following thesis about belief: anything inferable from anything else, by whatever principle or principles of inference (deductive or probabilistic), must be believed, *on pain of contradiction*, so long as everything from which it follows is also believed. In other words, if belief is of the same nature as thought, then it would quite literally be self-contradictory for someone to believe premises P1...Pn but not believe the conclusion C if he arrives at C by "the rules of logic" from P1...Pn. Accordingly, if we let C be the conclusion of the skeptical argument (= "that all is uncertain, and that our judgment is not in any thing possest of any measures of truth and falshood," T 183), and if we accept all the premises (as Hume clearly thinks the principles of evidence commit us to doing), then to infer C from these premises renders it impossible not to believe C, if belief is nothing but "a simple act of thought." Given the evident fact that no one who believes the premises of the skeptical argument and recognizes that C is inferable from them actually believes C (since "nature, by an absolute and uncontroulable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel," T 183), Hume's skepticism with regard to reason may therefore be regarded as further confirmation that the intellectualist conception of belief is false.

By contrast, the same skeptical reasoning validates Hume's affective conception of belief since it, by contrast with the intellectualist conception, can accommodate the fact that no one believes the conclusion of the skeptical argument. In particular, if sensation and feeling are not marginal to belief but rather its very essence, then belief is no more subject to the rules of logic than itches and anxiety are. For since nothing can *logically* (rationally) necessitate a feeling, there is no contradiction in believing all of P1...Pn and still not believing C. Indeed, even if the premises of our reasoning were *deductively* sufficient vis à vis the conclusion, there would still be no *logical necessity* implying that this conclusion will be believed, if belief is, as Hume claims, a mere sensation or feeling.[8] For since it is no more

possible for sensations to enter into a philosophical argument (as premises or conclusion) than for breathing or rage to do so, no course of reasoning, deductive or probable, is capable of "concluding" in either a sensation or the absence thereof. Nature, not reason, has determined us to judge as well as to breathe and feel because, for Hume, affirmation and denial are above all else *affections* ("a sensation or peculiar manner of conception"), not relations of ideas ("'tis *felt*, rather than conceiv'd," T 627). Thus, given Hume's conception of belief, there is no difficulty understanding how even a "trivial property" of the fancy can suffice to break the force of the strongest argument, demonstrative or probable, skeptical reasoning not excepted.[9]

IV. Is Hume's Conception of Reason Vulnerable to the Skeptic?

Yet, the mere fact that Hume's conception of belief as vivacity-affection is logically *compatible* with disbelief in the conclusion of the skeptical argument does not mean that his conception of reason as customary association is any less liable to fall prey to skepticism than alternative conceptions. Accordingly, in the third segment of I iv 1, he considers "how it happens, even on my hypothesis [about belief], that these arguments ... produce not a total suspense of judgment, and after what manner the mind ever retains a degree of assurance in any subject?" (T 184). To show this concern to be well-founded, Hume recasts his skeptical argument in such a way that it goes through regardless of whether belief in their premises is founded on "principles...of thought or sensation." He then proceeds to prove that no conception of reason is immune to skepticism, his own included.

So, how then does Hume account for the fact that we nevertheless go on trusting our reason, "either in philosophy or common life"? His response is worth quoting in full:

> I answer, that after the first and second decision; as the action of the mind becomes forc'd and unnatural, and the ideas faint and obscure; tho' the principles of judgment, and the ballancing of opposite causes be the same as the very beginning; yet their influence on the imagination, and the vigour they add to, or diminish from the thought, is by no means equal. Where the mind reaches not its objects with easiness and facility, the same principles have not the same effect as in a more natural conception of the ideas; nor does the imagination feel a sensation, which holds any proportion with that which arises from its common judgments and opinions. The attention is on the stretch: The posture of the mind is uneasy; and the spirits being diverted from their natural course,

> are not govern'd in their movements by the same laws, at least not to the same degree, as when they flow in their usual channel. (T 185)

The crucial part is the end: "the spirits being diverted from their natural course, are not govern'd in their movements by the same laws, at least not to the same degree, as when they flow in their usual channel." The laws in question are, presumably, Hume's own principles of association, particularly causal inference construed as customary association. The reformulation of the skeptical argument in the third segment of I iv 1 thus serves to bring its premises into line with his own associationist model of reasoning,[10] so that each premise, P1...Pn, is invested with the credibility of custom-bred forceful, lively ideas. By virtue of everything Hume has asked us to accept about human understanding in I iii, we should expect them to convey their vivacity to the conclusion C, and thereby confer belief on the thought that "that all is uncertain" which follows from them, in accordance with the principles of natural relation. Admittedly, the failure to believe C none the less would not amount to a *logical* contradiction; for, on the Humean conception of empirical rationality (customary association), not believing the conclusion C would simply mean not having the requisite degree of vivacity-feeling. Nevertheless, there seems to me no question that Hume's associationist model of reason *predicts* that we should all be believers in C (negative dogmatism), or at least that the degree of belief we have in C should suffice to cancel out any belief we have in its contrary, and so create a total suspension of belief and indifference to dogmatic reason (see T 186-187). *Treatise* I iv 1 thus presents us with a situation in which Hume's own associationist model seems not only helpless to explain the fact that no one believes C but even to be contradicted by it. If so, then Hume's skepticism regarding reason would seem to be just as destructive of his own affective conception of reason as its more orthodox intellectualist rivals.

V. Affection in Hume's Theory of Understanding

Defenders of Hume might remind us that he never claimed that the principles of association are "the *infallible* [or] the *sole* causes of an union among ideas," merely that they are "the only general principles, which associate ideas" (T 92). We should thus give due regard to his warning that association "not be consider'd as an inseparable connexion" but merely "as a gentle force, which commonly prevails" (T 10). Yet Hume himself chose not to adopt this tactic against skepticism with regard to reason. On the contrary, instead of modestly confessing the limitations inherent in his associationist account of reason, he seems simply to have plucked out of the air an altogether new psychological principle, apparently for the sole purpose of explaining our non-belief in C:

> Where the mind reaches not its objects with easiness and facility, the same principles have not the same effect as in a more natural conception of the ideas; nor does the imagination feel a sensation, which holds any proportion with that which arises from its common judgments and opinions.... No wonder, then, that the conviction, which arises from a subtile reasoning, diminishes in proportion to the efforts, which the imagination makes to enter into the reasoning, and to conceive it in all its parts. Belief, being a lively conception, can never be entire, where it is not founded on something natural and easy. (T 186)

Quite apart from the question of the adequacy of this explanation, what is perhaps most striking is the absence here of any sign of discomfiture on Hume's part. On the contrary, he proceeds as if this explanation were not only consistent with, but also part and parcel of, what he had been maintaining about human reason all along. Indeed, it may not be going too far to say that he seems to view it as confirming the very account of customary association it is needed to rescue! Is it any wonder, then, that some commentators see this as evidence of Hume's readiness to sacrifice almost any contrary phenomenon for the sake of associationist theory, no matter how makeshift and ad hoc the means required to do so?[11]

As for the explanation itself, one can only shake one's head in wonder that a philosopher of Hume's stature could proffer anything so transparently inadequate. The sciences and other learned disciplines provide countless examples of "subtile reasoning," demanding immense efforts of study and reflection, which nevertheless command our strong and enduring assent. Anyone with the requisite training to master a complex scientific argument, and who has been convinced of the evidence marshalled in its favor, will accept its conclusion in as natural and unforced a manner as any inference in common life. This seems beyond dispute. So how can we be expected to credit the thesis that the conclusion of Hume's skeptical argument fails to convince simply because of the difficulties involved in mastering its premises and assessing their evidence, and because of its remoteness from common life? These features seem truer still of the abstruse reasoning one finds in Maxwell, Heisenberg, and others, whose conclusions are now universally accepted as fact, or at least as near to fact as present-day humans are capable of getting. Yet Hume seems to overlook this completely when he writes that "the same argument, which wou'd have been esteem'd convincing in a reasoning concerning history or politics, has little or no influence in these abstruser subjects, even tho' it be perfectly comprehended; and that because there is requir'd a study and an effort of thought, in order to its being comprehended" (T 185). If perfectly comprehended, does that not imply that all the difficulties *have* been overcome? Why should we still have

difficulty believing its conclusion if the premises and their relation to the conclusion are exactly analogous to equally complicated arguments in the sciences whose conclusions elicit our assent? In any event, if indeed, as Hume maintains, it is "the same argument" in both cases, then it would appear that his explanation fails to identify anything distinctive about skeptical reasoning that, by contrast with other kinds of complex reasoning, might explain why, even after it is "perfectly comprehended," the conclusion continues to strike us as "forc'd and unnatural." We therefore seem to be left with either a trivial, uninformative explanation—that we believe what we find easy to believe and do not believe what we find difficult to believe—or no explanation at all, simply the brute fact, wrapped up in "pretty phrases,"[12] that human beings have a natural disinclination to believe complex arguments whose subject matter is the probability of error itself.[13]

Misgivings such as these are, in my view, wholly misplaced, and reflect nothing so much as a lack of understanding of Hume's (admittedly elusive) explanation. There may be a number of ways one could interpret Hume's thesis that "belief, being a lively conception, can never be entire, where it is not founded on something natural and easy" (T 186), but certainly no interpretation that fails to recognize that the "liveliness" in question is a term of art, relating to a special kind of content having the nature of an *affection*, unique to Hume's theory of understanding, can be regarded as tenable. In the Appendix to the *Treatise*, Hume strives "to guard against all mistakes of readers" (T 623) by stating, repeatedly and unambiguously, that the "force", "vivacity", "solidity", etc., of a belief are to be construed in terms of its *feeling* immanent to the mind forming it ("'tis *felt* rather than conceiv'd," "an idea assented to *feels* different from a fictitious idea," "belief consists not in the nature and order of our ideas, but in the manner of their conception and feeling to the mind," etc.).[14] Equally clearly, this feeling is not simply an *accompaniment*, *cause*, or *consequence* of believing, but instead is *identical* with it (see T 103, 116, 119-20, 130, 153, and 184). For while Hume recognized that there are *also* feelings that accompany, cause, or are caused by beliefs,[15] *these* feelings are different in kind from the species of affection which, according to him, is *constitutive* of belief itself. The affective accompaniments of belief are one and all impressions of reflexion (passions and emotions),[16] while the affect constitutive of belief is not a distinct perception (idea or impression) in its own right, but simply a "manner" of conceiving (regarding, being aware of) perceptions. That is, regardless of whether we ascribe the belief to reason, memory, or the senses, all believing, according to Hume, consists in nothing over and above this peculiar feeling of vivacity, determinative of our *consciousness* of a content before the mind (the manner of our representing it) rather than of the content itself (see T 86, 95, 153, 265, and 623-630). Unlike passions and emotions, which

count as full-fledged perceptions in their own right (objects present to consciousness, subject to the bidirectional separability principle of T 18), vivacity feeling is a species of affect immanent to consciousness itself (inclusive of imagination), coloring, as it were, the way we regard things ("the imagination feel[s] a sensation," T 186), and in no sense anything distinct or apart from our contemplative regard (i.e., in no sense an "object" of consciousness in the sense that impressions of reflexion, and perceptions generally, are).[17] The thesis of *Treatise* I iv 1, that belief must always be "founded on something natural and easy," must therefore be construed as relating to an affection of this special type, overlooked or discounted by nearly every philosopher prior to or since Hume.[18]

VI. Relation as Facility Affect: Vivacity Follows Facility

Before we can fully comprehend the point Hume was endeavoring to make by means of skepticism with regard to reason, we first have to understand what is meant by *natural* and *easy* in "belief, being a lively conception, can never be entire, where it is not founded on something natural and easy." Hume applied these and cognate expressions to characterize the *passage* of thought along successive perceptions. A transition from a perception presently before the mind to a successor may be facile, indifferent, or difficult; smooth or interrupted; easy or forced; natural or unnatural; etc. Such language is, again, strongly suggestive that a species of imagination-immanent affection is intended, and scrutiny of the relevant texts confirms this.

The clearest, most striking examples are concentrated in, but are by no means exclusive to, Hume's treatment of identity relations in I iv 2-6. Thus, in the case of what he terms "imperfect" identity (including body and the self)

> that action of the imagination, by which we consider the uninterrupted and invariable object, and that by which we reflect on the succession of related objects, are almost the same to the feeling, nor is there much more effort requir'd in the latter case than the former. The relation facilitates the transition of the mind from one object to another, and renders its passage as smooth as if it contemplated one continu'd object. This resemblance is the cause of the confusion and mistake, and makes us substitute the notion of identity, instead of that of related objects. (T 253-254)[19]

Even if qualitative change occurs, so long as it is sufficiently gradual, the mind "feels an easy passage from the surveying its condition in one moment to the viewing of it another, and at no particular time perceives any interruption" (T 256). Thus, two perceptions that, compared directly, would

never be regarded as identical, may nevertheless be identified in imagination as a single, continuing existence if there are enough intermediate forms to keep the transition feeling sufficiently smooth (natural and easy) from beginning to end.

What is here important is that in both cases, imperfect and perfect identity, the locus of the resemblance relation is not the resembling appearances before the mind (the impressions and ideas it contemplates) but its own affective disposition in contemplating them—that is, feelings immanent to associative imagination itself:

> resemblance...not only causes an association of ideas, but also of dispositions, and makes us conceive the one idea by an act or operation of the mind, similar to that by which we conceive the other.... [Thus] a succession of related objects places the mind in...the same smooth and uninterrupted progress of the imagination, as attends the view of the same invariable object.... The thought slides along the succession with equal facility, as if it consider'd only one object; and therefore confounds the succession with the identity. (T 202-204; see also T 61)

Nor is this the full extent of the role played by imagination-immanent facility affect in the formation of ideas of identity. When the smooth, easy passage of the imagination is interrupted by a temporary cessation in the appearance of the object to the senses (that is, a break in the sequence of resembling perceptions, perhaps as brief as a blink of the eyes), the feeling of facility too is interrupted, creating great "perplexity" and "uneasiness." On the one hand, the smoothness of the contemplating is abruptly ended, and with it the fiction of continuing identity, by the interruption of the appearance; on the other hand, the imagination has a propensity to continue the identity because of the strong resemblance before and after the interruption. Consequently, the imagination finds itself confronted with equally natural yet opposed feelings in its passage through successive perceptions, and, as always happens in the face of unpleasantness, is thereby motivated to do something to eliminate the conflict and restore its (naturally preferred) harmony and ease:

> Now there being here an opposition betwixt the notion of the identity of resembling perceptions, and the interruption of their appearance, the mind must be uneasy in that situation, and will naturally seek relief from the uneasiness. Since the uneasiness arises from the opposition of two contrary principles, it must look for relief by sacrificing the one to the other. But as the smooth passage of our thought along our resembling perceptions makes us ascribe to

> them an identity, we can never without reluctance yield up that opinion.... We may easily indulge our inclination to that supposition.... by feigning a continu'd being, which may fill those intervals [of interrupted appearance]. (T 206-208)

The crucial point for our purpose is that it is to the imagination's own feeling, the feeling immanent to consciousness itself occasioned by the appearances before it, that harmony returns. Thus, for Hume, the imagination is as much an organ of feeling (affect) as of representational activity.[20]

As fictions of bodily continuity go, so too goes that of a mental continued existence. For just as feelings immanent to imaginative consciousness (i.e., resembling affective dispositions in contemplation) prompt us to affirm the identity of bodies notwithstanding their *interrupted* appearance to the senses, the same kinds of feeling lead us to attribute identity to consciousness itself notwithstanding kaleidoscopic *variations* of perceptions and contemplatings. Personal identity, according to Hume, is the result of confounding the feelings occasioned in the imagination by contemplating an uninterrupted sequence of causal relations[21] between successive perceptions with the feelings characteristic of perfect identity ("that action of the imagination, by which we consider the uninterrupted and invariable object, and that by which we reflect on the succession of related objects, are almost the same to the feeling, nor is there much more effort of thought requir'd in the latter case than in the former," T 253-254). Hence, even in the absence of anything "that really binds our several perceptions together," we still "feel [a bond] among the ideas we form of them" (T 259); and as "the very essence" of these bonds "consists in their producing an easy transition of ideas; it follows that our notions of personal identity proceed entirely from the smooth and uninterrupted progress of the thought along a train of connected ideas" (T 260). Correspondingly, since "identity depends on the relations of ideas; and these relations produce identity, by means of that easy transition they occasion" (T 262), we need only to postulate a gradual diminution in the feeling of facility to weaken the identity, until eventually it is so feeble that the belief in identity (the vivacity of the idea of self) vanishes altogether ("but as the relations, and the easiness of the transition may diminish by insensible degrees, we have no just standard, by which we can decide any dispute concerning the time, when they acquire or lose a title to the name of identity," T 262).

However, identity relations are just one example of association, the centerpiece of Hume's philosophical system (T 661-662); and the core of the Humean conception of human understanding (empirical reason, judgment) is the union of association and habit: *customary association*. With this, all should agree. But that facility affect in particular is the heart of Hume's

conception of association is rarely recognized, and few if any interpreters seem to harbor any suspicions of its fundamental importance for him. Yet from the outset, Hume defines the association of ideas in terms of "some quality, by which one idea naturally introduces another," whereupon, "in the course of our thinking, and in the constant revolution of our ideas, our imagination runs easily from one idea to any other" (T 10-11). Indeed, far from being a mere accompaniment or consequence of ideas standing in certain relations, Hume went so far as to assert that facility is the "very nature and essence of relation" itself—a point he deemed sufficiently important to repeat it on at least four separate occasions (T 99, 204, 220, 260; see also 309 and 355-356). Facility affect should therefore be regarded as standing to *relation* exactly as "force and vivacity" stands to *real existence*[22]: the original of all our ideas must be traced back to something essentially affective in nature, without which the idea would lose its sense and application.[23]

In the case of causal relations, this is doubly true since, for Hume, facility is the essence of *customary* transitions of thought just as it is of *association* (see T 422); and causal inference, indeed empirical rationality generally, is, according to him, nothing over and above customary association ("the union of cause and effect, when strictly examin'd, resolves itself into a customary association," T 260):

> custom, to which I attribute all belief and reasoning, may operate upon the mind in invigorating an idea.... For supposing that in all past experience we have found two objects to have been always conjoin'd together, 'tis evident, that upon the appearance of one of these objects in an impression, we must from custom make an easy transition to the idea of that object, that usually attends it; and by means of the present impression and easy transition must conceive that idea in a strong and more lively manner, than we do any loose floating image of the fancy. (T 115-116)

> According to my system, all reasonings are nothing but the effects of custom; and custom has no influence, but by inlivening the imagination, and giving us a strong conception of any object. (T 149)[24]

The more frequently and constantly perceptions are conjoined, the more complete the habit; and this, for Hume, is just to say that the passage from the impression to the idea "must by degrees acquire a facility and force; and by its firm hold and easy introduction distinguish itself from any new and unusual idea" (T 116).[25] Indeed, this "firm hold and easy introduction"—that is, the conjunction of the reality and relation affects

(vivacity and facility)—is *the sole and entire content of our idea of necessary connection, the original "impression" from which all ideas of dependent existence are copied.* Deprived of either affect, it simply would not occur to human beings to adopt the curious practice of referring the existence of anything to anything else, precedent or concurrent. Indeed, even if the experience of their constant conjunction might still engender in us a habitual recollection, the custom could do no more than place the idea before us in thought; but, unless the passage *to* it *from* the present appearance felt easy and natural to us, there would be nothing to distinguish it from anything "new and unusual," and, consequently, no relation between them would be recognized ("felt") by the mind. Moreover, since in that case there would be nothing "natural and easy" on which belief in the idea (vivacity) could be founded, even if our mental habit induced us to *conceive* them as related, we would not confer any *belief* (vivacity-feeling) upon their relation. Thus, though seldom if ever remarked, the affective dimension of what Hume calls "reasoning" is even more crucial than the causative factors (experience and habit) he associated with their production.[26] And this, as we shall soon see, is precisely the point he needed the argument from "scepticism with regard to reason" to establish.

VII. Pleasure and Pain as Motivating Principles of Human Understanding

It is evident even from Hume's terminology ("vivacity", "facility") that he classified feelings immanent to imagination as a distinct species of pleasure and pain, alongside bodily sensations and reflexions (passions, emotions, volitions). It thus hardly needs saying, in view of the affective character of belief and relation, (i) that "belief must please the imagination by means of the force and vivacity which attends it; since every idea, which has force and vivacity, is found to be agreeable to that faculty" (T 122; see also 453), and (ii) that "facility...is another very powerful principle of the human mind, and an infallible source of pleasure.... The pleasure of facility does not so much consist in any ferment of the spirits, as in their orderly motion" (T 423). Since facility and vivacity affects are the heart not only of Hume's account of causation and identity but also of his entire theory of association as applied to space and time, abstract ideas, philosophical relations, substance, existence, etc., this is tantamount to affirming that the pleasure principle reigns supremely in the domain of understanding just as surely as it does, in his view, in the sphere of the passions and morals ("Each of the passions and operations of the mind has a particular feeling, which must be either agreeable or disagreeable," T 590).[27] The paramountcy of pleasant and painful affect in Hume's theory of understanding thus serves to

set it apart from every other such theory that came before and seamlessly unities it, under the pleasure principle, with the other parts of his system of human nature.

VIII. The Point of I iv 1: The Primacy of Facility Affect over Every Other Principle of Human Understanding in Determining Belief

In light of the foregoing, the principle implicit in Hume's claim that "belief, being a lively conception, can never be entire, where it is not founded on something natural and easy" (T 186) should now be evident: *vivacity (the foundation of all notions of real existence) follows facility (the foundation of all notions of relation).* Moreover, since he inserted it in the aftermath of a skeptical argument with as strong and deep a foundation in customary association as the dogmatic variety of reason with which he contrasts it (see T 186-187), it has the further significance that vivacity follows facility *regardless* of experience and habit, and even if it means going *counter* to them. In other words, we may suppose perceptions to be conjoined as frequently and as constantly as we like. We may further suppose that the repeated experience of such conjunctions inculcates habits of mind so strong that, upon the appearance or thought of one of the conjuncts, the other invariably follows directly in its train. But is this sufficient for us to regard these ideas as *related,* to *connect* them in "our thought or consciousness" (T 1, 636)? The answer implied by the thesis that vivacity follows facility is *no*: the transition must *feel* easy and natural *if* the vivacity of a perception is to be conveyed to an idea conjoined to it by experience-bred custom. If this feeling is absent, then, no matter how completely reason—experience and habit—may determine us to *think* the idea, the imagination will not be conscious of any relation between them. And since, in the absence of any consciousness of their relation, it will not convey the vivacity of an impression to a succeeding idea, our former state of non-belief in the idea will remain unaltered.

The consciousness of two perceptions as related is essentially an affective awareness for Hume: an affair of "feeling" or "sensation," and not a simple act of thought (observation and/or reflection). No matter how often a sequence of perceptions is repeated or how constant it is, if the passage to the idea in thought is not marked by a feeling of "easiness and facility" (T 185), it would fail to "distinguish itself from any new and unusual idea" (T 116); and since facility is "the very nature and essence of relation," to say that the imagination would not sense (*feel*) any relation between them is as much as to say there is *no relation between them at all.* This is clearer still in cases where the passage is "forc'd and unnatural" (T 185): irrespective of the frequency and constancy of the conjunction, the imagination would be induced by such a feeling to dissociate the perceptions involving such a

passage, and ever after keep them separate and apart, experience and habit notwithstanding. In either case, the absence of a smooth, easy, natural transition between perceptions is sufficient to prevent the imagination from recognizing any relation between them, with the consequence that it will convey none of the vivacity from the one to its less vivid constant conjunct. Experience and habit—empirical "reason" as Hume defined it in I iii—is quite incapable, in the absence of facility effect, of establishing any relation at all between perceptions; and this, for Hume, has the consequence that we would not feel any belief (vivacity) when forming the conception of a union between them.[28]

This should suffice to make clear what it means for vivacity always to follow facility. Relation, for Hume, is *constituted* by facility affect; this is its very "nature or essence" (T 204). Where the passage of thought is not natural and easy (or where, as in the case of philosophical relations, the lack of any *foundation* in passages of this kind),[29] the human understanding (imagination) is simply not capable of recognizing ("feeling") a relation of perceptions in any transition from one to the other.[30] In particular, constant conjunction (experience) and habit are, in no intrinsic sense, "grounds" for belief in causal relations. In the absence of (and, a fortiori, if contrary to) facility affect, they would never be the occasion of such beliefs, and it would consequently *never* even occur to us to designate experience and habit means whereby knowledge of reality and matters of fact may be obtained.[31] Indeed, we associate them with relation not simply because experience reveals that constant conjunction and habit are constantly conjoined with facility-affect, but because this constant union in imagination is itself characterized by a "natural and easy" transition between them. Thus, like all the other principles of Hume's philosophy, it is experience, as the source of facile transitions of imagination, that teaches us that facility-affect is indispensable even to our association-based "second-order" belief that experience is capable of revealing necessary connections, and so to the science of empirical rationality itself (Hume's version of a "naturalized epistemology": see *Treatise* I iii 15). And that is the point of *Treatise* I iv 1.[32]

IX. The Place of Skepticism with Regard to Reason in the Plan of Book I of the *Treatise*

The general thesis of Hume's skepticism regarding reason is that affect exceeds even experience and habit in importance where comprehending relation and belief in real existence is concerned. Yet, the skeptical argument of I iv 1 was not needed to establish this, since, as we have seen, it is built right into the conceptions of association and custom developed and defended in parts i-iii. So, if Hume's skepticism is not in the end to appear meretricious, there must be something else, essential to his system, which it

alone is capable of establishing. What this is should now be clear: the more specific thesis that *facility affect has primacy over every principle of human understanding, including experience and habit, in the determination of belief, howsoever belief is construed.* This, in my view, is the method to Hume's apparent madness in conceding that his own notion of rational belief ("a sensation or peculiar manner of conception") is just as much at the mercy of skepticism with regard to reason as its contrary ("a simple act of thought").[33] The skeptical argument provided him with a means whereby to prise facility-affect loose from customary association and set them working in opposition to each other, thus making it possible to assess which of them is the more powerful factor in the determination of belief. Skepticism regarding reason may thus be compared to the sort of critical experiment a scientist might devise in order to isolate factors that otherwise are almost never found separately, much less in contrariety. Indeed, it is difficult to think of an alternative, much less a better, way in which Hume could have established that facility affect prevails in any contest with empirical reason (experience and habit), in order thereby to pave the way for the central role he assigns to facility in the subsequent sections dealing with identity relations (including their conflict with empirical reason: see T 231 and 266). Skepticism with regard to reason therefore proves itself indispensable to the completeness and furtherance of Hume's design in the first book of the *Treatise,* by disclosing that vivacity follows facility irrespective of the effects of experience and habit.

The primacy of facility over every principle of human understanding in the determination of belief does, indeed, have a dark side, insofar as it confronts us with a stark choice "betwixt a false reason and none at all."[34] Nevertheless, it serves an equally important positive role in the development and defense of Hume's analysis of the nature and workings of human understanding, by revealing that the pleasure principle reigns supreme over understanding just as it does over the rest of human mentation and action. This is what is achieved in "Of scepticism with regard to reason": proof that we believe not because experience gives us reason to, nor because of the habits of mind it instills in us, but simply and solely because certain passages of thought feel pleasantly "natural and easy" to the understanding while others do not. Thus, far from being an ad hoc contrivance to salvage theory in the face of recalcitrant phenomena, it should now be evident that Hume's thesis that belief must always be "founded on something natural and easy" goes to the very heart of his associationist conception of what human understanding is. Indeed, skepticism regarding reason enabled Hume to demonstrate that facility is nothing less than the support upon which everything else in that conception depends.[35]

We should not, however, be the least surprised that Hume was unable to resist the temptation to use this principle to make a swipe at traditional

metaphysics. For not just skepticism but metaphysical ratiocination generally falls foul of the pleasure principle that actuates human understandings: since philosophy almost never reaches its objects with any "easiness and facility," it fails signally to produce conviction, except of the most feeble and fitful kind. ("The same argument, which wou'd have been esteem'd convincing in a reasoning concerning history or politics, has little or no influence in these abstruser subjects, even tho' it be perfectly comprehended; and that because there is requir'd a study and an effort of thought, in order to its being comprehended." [T 185]) The peculiar difficulty of such arguments consists not in their being beyond our ability to master them, or in the amount of effort and study necessary to attain this mastery (far less than the arguments of mathematicians and natural scientists typically require). Instead, no matter how many times we run through a metaphysical argument, or how familiar we become with its terms and their connections, the effort and study necessary to follow it to its conclusion are not the sort that disappear once the argument is mastered. In Hume's view, the difficulty of a metaphysical argument is akin to that we would experience if a tragic poet were to "represent his heroes as very ingenious and witty in their misfortunes" (T 186). For it "wou'd never the touch the passions" if, say, Lady Macbeth described her "damn'd spot" as a sense-datum patch in her visual field, amidst the kaleidoscopic flux of her perceptions; or if Juliet, instead of counting the ways she loved Romeo, queried whether they fall within the course of values of various second-level concepts; or if in place of "Ecce Homo" the Romans had inscribed a formula in the logic of indexicals or a list of criteria whereby an ostensive definition might "make contact in language" with its definiendum. The problem with metaphysical reasoning, Hume's own or anyone else's, is that it is so remote and detached from all the familiar contexts of reasoning and action as almost never to strike us as "natural and easy." The strain on the imagination when we are asked to suppose that we are witness not to a world of people and material things but to a mere flux of perceptions, and then to reason on this basis, is simply too great for our animalian imaginations to sustain ("the present situation of the person is always that of the imagination," T 430). Long before we reach the conclusion, we tire of opposing our imagination's predominant disposition and find our thoughts drawn back to the more mundane sphere that is their natural home: the world of dynamically interconnected physical objects and persons extending into the vastness of space and time.

This, in my view, is the special difficulty of metaphysical suppositions that Hume had in mind: they run directly counter to the predominant feelings of the very faculty to which the metaphysician must ultimately appeal: imagination.[36] The effort required of the imagination to think itself into a reality composed entirely of sense-data (or: of senses and their

referents, of possible worlds, of world-making and holistic webs, et al.), never diminishes, and can be only fleetingly sustained. It continues always "forc'd and unnatural" and, since vivacity follows facility, can bring only the mere shadow of conviction in its wake, but never its substance. According to Hume, this difficulty is inescapable, and explains why metaphysics, for all its profusion of secure grounds and impeccable reasoning, trails so far behind even the most arcane among the sciences in its ability to influence our thought and actions.

X. Other Instances of the Primacy of Facility in the *Treatise*

Once we recognize that the point of "Scepticism with regard to reason" is to establish the primacy of facility over experience and habit in the determination of belief, other examples in the *Treatise* leap out at us as well. Although education determines belief in the same manner as experience—by engendering habits—it often prevails against experience and reason:

> I am persuaded, that upon examination we shall find more than one half of those opinions, that prevail among mankind, to be owing to education, and that the principles, which are thus embrac'd, over-ballance those, which are owing either to abstract reasoning or experience." (T 117)

Likewise,

> 'Tis difficult for us to withhold our assent from what is painted out to us in all the colours of eloquence; the vivacity produc'd by the fancy is in many cases greater than that which arises from custom and experience.... Nor will it be amiss to remark, that as a lively imagination very often degenerates into madness, or folly...[it] influence[s] the judgment after the same manner, and produce[s] belief from the very same principles. (T 123; see also 426-427)

Numerous other examples are instanced in the sections on "the effects of other relations and other habits" (I iii 9) as well as "unphilosophical probability" (I iii 13).

However, the most striking illustration of the primacy of facility in Hume's science of human nature relates to the production not of imagination-immanent vivacity affect but of affections in the usual sense, particularly indirect passions of pride and humility, love and hatred: feelings which merely accompany, but are not immanent to, acts of imagination. Hume explains indirect passions as products of a double *relation* of impressions and ideas. In accordance with the nature of relation as facility of transition, this is just to say that "these two attractions or associations of

impressions and ideas...mutually assist each other, and the transition of the affections and of the imagination is made with the greatest ease and facility" (T 289); "the two impulses concur with each other, and render the whole transition more smooth and easy," (T 339). Conversely, where other factors conspire to diminish or quash the facility felt in the transition of either or both of these relations, then, notwithstanding experience and habit, or the presence of everything requisite for relations viewed "philosophically" (in the sense detailed at T 13-15, 94, and 170), neither pride nor humility, love nor hatred, will be engendered.

Striking confirmation that facility is the prime determinant of Hume's thinking about the indirect passions can be found in the final three of Hume's eight "Experiments to confirm this system" in *Treatise* II ii 2. For in order to recognize as well-founded Hume's otherwise puzzling claim that "not only the variations resolve themselves into the general principle, but even the variations of these variations" (T 347), we need only to keep in mind that a double relation of impressions and ideas is, in accordance with the "nature and essence of relation" (T 204), impossible without a *double facile transition.* That is, the power of one relation to cause the other depends entirely on the presence of an adequate degree of facility feeling; failing this, then, even if the relation obtains "philosophically", it will lack its usual effect. Thus, the mode of analysis common to Hume's final three experiments is to show that if any circumstance prevents, counterbalances, or outweighs the facility felt in one or both directions of relation, then the relation will fail to have its usual effect on the passions, imagination, or both.

The sixth experiment concerns the following asymmetry: love or hatred for another commonly produces the resembling passion of pride or humility in oneself, whereas pride or humility in oneself does not as a rule produce love or hatred for another. Since the same relations exist in both directions, this asymmetry might appear to confound the prediction implicit in Hume's system of double relation. Hume responds to the challenge by conceding that the relevant relations obtain, but locates the cause of the asymmetry in the differing degrees of facility affect that characterize the relation of ideas in one direction as opposed to the other. Experience shows that a transition of thought from a less vivid to a more vivid idea of an object feels more facile to the imagination than one in the opposite direction;[37] and since the idea of the self is the most vivid of all ideas,[38] it follows that any transition to it is bound to feel that much easier, and any transition away from it that much more difficult, than is true, *ceteris paribus*, of any other idea:

> I have observ'd, that those two faculties of the mind, the imagination and passions, assist each other in their operation, when their propensities re similar, and when they act upon the same

> object.... The two impulses concur with each other, and render the whole transition more smooth and easy. But if it shou'd happen, that while the relation of ideas, strictly speaking, continues the same, its influence, in causing a transition of the imagination, shou'd no longer take place, 'tis evident its influence on the passions must also cease, as being dependent entirely on that transition. This is the reason why pride or humility is not transfus'd into love or hatred with the same ease, that the latter passions are chang'd into the former.... The passage is smooth and open from the consideration of any person related to us to that of ourself, of whom we are every moment conscious. But when the affections are once directed to ourself, the fancy passes not with the same facility from that object to any other person, how closely so ever connected with us. This easy or difficult transition of the imagination operates upon the passions, and facilitates or retards their transition. (T 339-340)[39]

The seventh experiment posits a contrariety between the facility feelings of imagination and the passions, such that the transition easiest and most natural to the former runs contrary to that easiest and most natural to the latter. For example,

> nothing is more natural than to bear a kindness to one brother on account of our friendship with another, without any farther examination of his character. A quarrel with one person gives us a hatred for the whole family, tho' entirely innocent of that, which displeases us. (T 341)

The natural flow of the passions in such a case is from a greater object, such as the head of a family, to lesser, subordinate ones ("our passions, like other objects, descend with greater facility than they ascend," T 342). Yet, the imagination, by contrast, finds the greatest ease in a transition from a lesser object to a greater one related to it, and only with difficulty can proceed reversewise. As "the affections are a more powerful principle than the imagination" (T 344), the easy transition of passions is able to overcome the opposition presented by the difficult transition of ideas. Nevertheless, the transition of passions loses much of its facility in overcoming the opposition of imagination; hence, "'tis commonly by complying with it, and by seeking another quality, which may counter-ballance that principle, from whence the opposition arises" (T 345). For example, if the servants or other subordinate members of the family are in our presence but the head of the household is distant, the superior facility of the contiguity relation in the direction from the remote (absent) greater object to the proximate (present)

subordinate object will cancel out some or all of the difficulty the imagination would otherwise feel in such a transition, thereby leaving "the way open from the one passion to the other" (T 346). Hume's seventh experiment thus exhibits the predominance of facility affect in determining the associations of impressions just as the sixth reveals it in the association of ideas: if a relation "by any particular circumstance, ceases to produce its usual effect of facilitating the transition," then it "ceases likewise to operate on the passions" (T 345).

The eighth experiment deals with a related anomaly: although in general the imagination passes with difficulty from a contiguous object (oneself) to a remoter one (another person), pride turns easily to love and humility to hatred when the object of love or hatred (another person) is the cause (through praise) of our pride or (through blame) of our humiliation. Why this exception? The "transition in this case is not made merely on account of the relation betwixt ourselves and the person; but because that very person is the real cause of our first passion, and of consequence is intimately connected with it" (T 346). That is, the causal relation repairs the want of a facile transition that would otherwise characterize a transition from something contiguous to something remote; and since the presence of a facile transition of adequate strength, *no matter what its nature*, supplies the essential condition Hume's system requires to effect a transition from pride or humility to the resembling impressions of love or hatred, he was quite justified in maintaining that this case "is not a contradiction, but an exception to the rule; and an exception that arises from the same reason as the rule itself," and "is, therefore, rather a confirmation of the rule."

In sum, in all three experiments, we have only to recognize that double relations always resolve into double facile transitions—because of the primacy of facility in all relations of perceptions, of impressions no less than of ideas—to appreciate that there is nothing gratuitous or ad hoc in Hume's claim that "not only the variations resolve themselves into the general principle, but even the variations of these variations" (T 347).

Numerous other examples might be cited to illustrate how the recognition that facility is the essence of relation can transform our view of Hume's treatment of the passions from an accumulation of ever more convoluted epicycles pasted to salvage theory in the face of recalcitrant phenomena to a marvelously streamlined system of double facile transitions, fully consonant with the methods and doctrines of the first book of the *Treatise*.[40] Suffice it to say that, for Hume, a relation *is* nothing but a facile transition; and whereas *philosophically* the same relation exists in one direction as in the other, if any circumstance should result in the diminution or elimination of the facility in either or both directions of relation, then the relation ipso facto loses its ability to cause indirect passions. For it is not the relation as such but only facility of transition appertaining to it that can

facilitate the transition from pleasureful impressions to love or pride and from unpleasant impressions to hatred or humility. Thus, the affective dimension immanent to mental operations is as central to Hume's theory of the passions as it is to his theory of the understanding; and its neglect, more than anything else, may be deemed responsible for much, perhaps most, of the uncomprehending hostility that has hindered its reception from the outset.

XI. Conclusion

The point Hume makes in *Treatise* I iv 1, that facility affect has primacy over every other principle of human understanding, is one no interpreter can afford to neglect. With respect to understanding, skepticism with regard to reason shows us that vivacity (the source of all our notions of real existence) always follows facility (the source of all our notions of non-logical relation), even if relations founded on experience and habit are contradicted in the process. With respect to the passions and morals, it discloses the consistency underlying the sometimes meandering seeming course of Hume's theorizing, by revealing that (indirect) passions always follow facility, irrespective of (philosophical) relations, and even contrary to the natural tendencies of the imagination (facile transitions from obscure to lively, lesser to greater, etc.).

NOTES

1 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd edition revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978); hereafter abbreviated "T," with page references inserted parenthetically in the text. All references to Hume's first *Enquiry* are to David Hume, *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd edition revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975); abbreviated "EHU," with page references inserted parenthetically in the text.

2 William E. Morris identifies the target of the argument in *Treatise* I iv 1 as the same "prevalent rationalist or intellectualist model of the way the mind works," which Hume had earlier set out to demolish in "the famous argument of Part iii about causal inference," namely, "the view that our causal expectations are...based on reasoning" ("Hume's Scepticism about Reason," *Hume Studies* 15.1 [1989], 57). Francis Dauer takes a similar line: "when Hume attacks reason, he is pretty clearly attacking the role claimed for it by internalists like Descartes" ("Hume's Scepticism with Regard to Reason:

A Reconsideration," *Hume Studies* 22.2 [1996], 217).

3 Robert Fogelin is less reserved than most commentators in this regard. For him, Hume's argument is simply "a version of one of the traditional skeptical tropes: reason demands that every judgment be backed by a further judgment showing that the prior one is correct.... This leads, of course, to an infinite regress. Although Hume may have thought otherwise, this is the whole content of his argument." (*Hume's Skepticism in the* Treatise of Human Nature [London: Routledge, 1985)], 19; hereafter, *Hume's Skepticism*).

4 Fogelin distinguishes in Hume a skepticism regarding understanding and a different skepticism regarding reason, the former focusing on issues of induction in *Treatise* I iii and the latter on intuitive and demonstrative reason (see *Hume's Skepticism*, 13-14). Yet, while there may be a certain utility to this division, there seems no basis for ascribing it to Hume: (i) Hume rejected the notion that there is any philosophically significant difference between conception, judgment, and reasoning: all are to be understood in terms of transitions of thought and the enlivening of ideas, that is, customary association (see T 96-97n.); (ii) although it is true that in *Treatise* I iii Hume rejects rationalist/intellectualist conceptions of reason, he does so in favor of his own naturalistic conception of reason, as founded on customary association. This is not, at least in his mind, a rejection of reason per se, merely a different (and superior) account of what reason is; and he never represents his treatment of reasoning in I iii as skepticism (by contrast with I iv 1 and I iv 2, which are expressly labelled as such); (iii) in his treatment of mathematics in I ii, there is no evidence, either in the form of an explicit statement or terminological practice, to suggest that Hume thought he was talking about "reason" *instead* of "understanding"; indeed, the whole discussion might, with equal justice, be said to be about imagination and the senses (see T 72 and 638); (iv) when recapitulating I iv 1 in I iv 7, he uses 'reason' and 'understanding' interchangeably, while making clear that what he really means is "the general and more establish'd properties of the imagination" (T 267); (v) the argument of I iv 1 extends well beyond demonstrative reason, narrowly construed, to embrace the whole of probable reasoning, and indeed not just certain rationalist models of reasoning but Hume's own associationist one as well (see below). There therefore seems to be no basis for viewing the argument of I iv 1 as directed at reason rather than against understanding.

5 Hume's use of 'reason' and 'understanding' interchangeably with 'imagination' is in keeping what he says about them elsewhere. In the course of his discussion of probability, he asserts that "belief arises not merely from the transference of past to future, but from some operation of the fancy conjoin'd with it. This may lead us to conceive the manner, in which that faculty enters into our reasonings" (T 140). Previously, Hume had reduced all acts of the understanding to conception, and belief to "a strong and steady conception of any idea, and such as approaches in some measure to an immediate impression" (T 96-97n.), in which "we are not determin'd by reason, but by custom or a principle of association" (T 97). "All reasonings are nothing but the effects of custom" (T 14); and the attribution of customary association to imagination enabled Hume to "distinguish in the imagination

betwixt the principles which are permanent, irresistible, and universal; such as the customary transition from causes to effects, and from effects to causes: And the principles, which are changeable, weak, and irregular.... The former are the foundation of all our thoughts and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin" (T 225). Even abstract reasoning is ascribed to comparison by the "fancy" (see T 13, 72, and 638). Finally, the passage in which we are left with no choice "but betwixt a false reason and none at all" is the terminus of a discussion beginning on T 265, in which Hume summarizes the findings of Book I thusly: "The memory, senses, and understanding are, therefore, all of them founded on the imagination, or the vivacity of our ideas" (T 265). Consequently, the recollection of the argument of skepticism with regard to reason (I iv 1) at the end of Book I (I iv 7) leaves no doubt that the "reason" or "understanding" saved from self-destruction by "trivial propensities of the fancy" are none other than reason and understanding as Hume himself explained them: "the general and more establish'd properties of the imagination" (T 267).

6 Although Hume speaks of the "sensation or peculiar manner of conception" characteristic of belief, he more frequently refers to it as a "feeling" (e.g., T 86 and 103), especially in the appendices regarding belief (T 623-632) and the corresponding portion of the *Enquiry* (Section V, Part ii).

7 Within I iv 1, Hume twice expresses the difference between the two competing conceptions of belief in terms of thought vs. sensation (the second occurrence is in the paragraph beginning at the middle of T 184).

8 "[N]othing can be contrary to truth or reason, except what has a reference to it, and as the judgments of our understanding only have this reference, it must follow that passions can be contrary to reason only so far as they are accompany'd with some judgment or opinion." (T 415-416) Although belief is not a passion, being of a like nature it too cannot "be contrary to reason." The exception is belief concerning relations of ideas (as opposed to matters of fact and existence), where "belief" is merely the impossibility of thinking otherwise (see T 95 and 153). Nevertheless, in order for these beliefs to have any application to world of real existents, be it in thought or in action, the mediation of causal relations (customary association) is requisite (see T 413-414; also T 73-74).

9 According to Fogelin, Hume's "reasoning does not depend upon his phenomenological account of belief being forceful and lively perceptions" (*Hume's Skepticism*, 175n9). But if the foregoing analysis is correct, Hume's whole point in the second segment of I iv 1 is that our inability to believe the conclusion of the skeptical argument is impossible to explain, or even conceive, on any view which treats belief as "a simple act of thought." The primacy of affect is even more pronounced in the third segment, as we shall now see.

10

> I suppose, there is some question propos'd to me, and that after revolving over the impressions of my memory and senses, and

> carrying my thoughts from them to such objects, as are commonly conjoin'd with them, I feel a stronger and more forcible conception on the one side, than on the other. This strong conception forms my first decision. I suppose, that afterwards I examine my judgment itself, and observing from experience, that 'tis sometimes just and sometimes erroneous, I consider it as regulated by contrary principles or causes, of which some lead to truth and some to error; and in ballancing these contrary causes, I diminish by a new probability the assurance of my first decision. This new probability is liable to the same diminution as the foregoing, and so on, *in infinitum*. (T 184-185)

Although Hume does not state the point explicitly, it seems clear that the experience responsible for our believing that our judgment is sometimes correct and sometimes not works by producing in us a custom, and thereby a vivid idea (belief) in the fallibility of our judgment, so that when it is viewed as contrary to the first judgment, it diminishes its vivacity, and thence its probability, a few degrees. I will examine this argument in greater detail in the aforementioned follow-up paper, which continues my analysis of *Treatise* I iv 1.

11 According to John Passmore, "Hume tries to operate with a bold sweeping associationist psychology, but has constantly to supplement it with subsidiary 'propensities'. There is a suspiciously *ad hoc* air about the supplementation" (*Hume's Intentions*, 3rd edition [London: Duckworth, 1980], 75-76). Paul Guyer also seems to hold such a view: "Hume simply invokes certain natural tendencies of the mind to strengthen or weaken the vivacity of ideas under certain circumstances" ("Psychology and the Transcendental Deduction," in *Kant's Transcendental Deductions*, edited by E. Förster [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989], 53; hereafter, *Guyer*). Hume himself was not unaware of the risks he is accused of neglecting: "we must distinguish exactly betwixt the phænomenon itself, and the causes, which I shall assign to it; and must not imagine from any uncertainty in the latter, that the former is also uncertain. The phænomenon may be real, tho' my explication be chimerical" (T 60; see also 320 and 390).

12 These are the words in which Ian Hacking denigrates Hume's explanation. ("Hume's Species of Probability," *Philosophical Studies* 33 [1978], 30; hereafter, *Hume's Species*).

13 Thus Guyer: "the natural tendency of the mind to increase its estimation of the probability of error in any long calculation through reflection upon its own fallibility is counterbalanced by its equally natural disinclination to carry out any long calculations about the probability of error itself" (*Guyer*, 52).

14 The care taken by Hume in the appendices on belief (T 623-632) to help his reader comprehend his conception of belief as a species of affection was probably prompted by misunderstanding on the part of one or more of those he asked to read the first volume of the *Treatise* (Books I and II): "I have found by experience, that some of my expressions have not been so well chosen, as

to guard against all mistakes in the readers; and 'tis chiefly to remedy this defect, I have subjoin'd the following appendix" (T 623). Some (e.g., Flage, Broakes) think that the Appendix marks a change of view about belief, from a quality of ideas themselves (akin to the brightness of a color) to a feeling accompanying our reflection upon them. Yet, while it is true that Hume states that his intention in the appendices is to correct his mistakes, he immediately proceeds to confess that he finds only one mistake that is "very considerable," and this clearly is a reference to the discussion of personal identity on T 633-636, not that of belief on T 623-632 (lesser mistakes are listed on 636, but have nothing to do with the Book I account of belief per se). Although in Book I, the expressions "force and vivacity" and "manner of conception" predominate, "sensation" and "feeling" are used as well, both in I iv 1 and elsewhere (see note 6 above). In fact, there is no direct, much less explicit, textual basis for supposing that Hume's conception of belief altered in any way between the writing of the first book of the *Treatise* and either the Appendix or the first *Enquiry* (in Section V, Part ii whole segments of the appendices on belief are transcribed virtually unaltered). Anyone desirous of acquainting himself with an interpretation of Hume's conception of belief as vivacity capable of uniting all of these strands, and furthermore of showing that the notion of vivacity is univocal with respect to both impressions and ideas, should consult my *Hume's Theory of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; hereafter abbreviated "*HTC*"), in which vivacity is identified with verisimilitude, that is, something seeming real to the observer by virtue of the feeling immanent to his consciousness of it (be it pre-imaginatively or concomitantly with associative activity) rather than to the objects (impressions and ideas) contemplated by it: see chapters 1-A & -B, 2-B & -D, 4-A & -C, 5-D & -E, and 7-B.

15 See T 120, 321, 339-340, 373, 393, 422-438 (also T 115, 148, 380, EHU 93). It is crucial not to confound the one kind of feeling with the other, nor the senses in which both constitute pleasures and pains (see below).

16 For example, "Curiosity, or the love of truth" (II iii 10) is a passion for truth. It thus pertains not to understanding (imaginative consciousness) but to impressions of reflexion, and should be viewed as a cause (motive) or consequence of the pleasures immanent to understanding itself on account of the vivacity and facility of its conceptions (see section VII below).

17 Hume's usage of 'perception' is not perfectly consistent, but he almost always employed it to designate what is present to us in immediate awareness rather than such awareness itself. It was thus natural for him to use it interchangeably with 'object' (a usage which is sometimes made explicit: see, e.g., T 193, 202, 205, 207, 211-213, 216, and 218). This may be due to Hume's dissatisfaction with Locke's use of 'idea' to signify immediate objects of awareness and the resulting need for a substitute. So, whereas according to Locke's scheme, perceptions are a subclass of ideas (he reserved 'perception' to designate a species of idea of reflexion), the reverse is true in Hume's (see T 2n. and EHU 22n.), the only exceptions being contexts in which Hume's primary purpose is to criticize the views of philosophers who distinguish objects from perceptions (Hume himself seems to have rejected this distinction; for a criticism of the contrary supposition, see *HTC*, chapter 7-C).

Hume's 'perception' is thus roughly the same as Kant's term 'appearance', inner as well as outer—but not the same as 'intuition'!

18 Whether or not Kant was influenced by Hume in this regard, his appreciation of the importance of affect immanent to mental activity for comprehending the nature not only of aesthetic sentiment but also of objective cognition is evident in the following:

> If cognitions are to admit of being communicated, then the state of the mind, i.e., the attuning (*Stimmung*) of the cognitive faculties for a cognition in general, and indeed that proportion between them requisite for a representation (whereby an object is given) from which a cognition is to be made, must in general admit of being communicated: for as the subjective condition of cognizing, the cognition which is its effect could not arise without it. This actually always occurs when an object given by means of the senses brings the imagination into the activity of the composition of the manifold, and the understanding into that of bringing this manifold to the unity of concepts. This attuning of the cognitive faculties has, however, a distinct proportion according to the distinctness of the objects which are given. Nevertheless, a proportion must in general be given in which this internal relationship requisite for enlivening (*Belebung*) (one faculty by the other) is maximally conducive for both faculties vis à vis cognition (of given objects); and this attuning cannot be determined other than through feeling (not according to concepts). Now, since the attuning must itself admit of being communicated, and consequently the feeling thereof as well (in the case of a given representation), while the universal communicability of a feeling presupposes a sense common to all, the assumption of this common sense is well-founded...as the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our cognition which must be presupposed in every logic and each principle of cognition which is non-skeptical. (*Critique of Judgment* §21, my translation)

The "feeling" in question is one that arises directly through the harmonious interplay of the cognitive faculties, imagination and understanding, in their cognizing activity and must therefore be conceived of as immanent to (not distinguishable from) mental activity. Thus, not surprisingly, Kant's language at times becomes almost uncannily Humean:

> This enlivening of both faculties (imagination and understanding) belonging to an indeterminate but also, by means of the occasion of the given representation, concordant (*einhelliger*) activity, that, namely, belonging to a cognition in general, is the sensation whose universal communicability is postulated by the judgment of taste. An objective relation can of course only be thought, but insofar as it is, according to its conditions, subjective, it can be sensed in its effect on the mind; and, in the case of a relation (like that of the faculties of representation to a

> faculty of cognition in general) not grounded on any concept, no other consciousness of it is possible than through sensation of the effect which consists in the facilitated (*erleichterten*) play of both faculties of the mind (imagination and understanding) enlivened by their reciprocal agreement. (*Critique of Judgment* §9, my translation)

Because Kant sought to overthrow Hume's associationist theory of understanding and set in its place a theory of genuinely objective cognition, he does not equate the enlivening that accompanies certain mental activity with belief. But when his concern shifts from the conditions of objective cognition to reflection, together with the feelings immanent to reflective activity, his approach converges with Hume's to a remarkable degree.

19 This is the term Hume employs on T 256; it contrasts with the invariant, uninterrupted relation of identity he terms "perfect" on T 203. Both bodies and the mind (self, person) are imperfect identities, inasfar as their identity is not ended by variation and/or interruption. Here the difference between "perfection" and "imperfection" corresponds to that between the disposition of the imagination when successively contemplating the same idea and when successively contemplating the same relation of (varying and/or interrupted) ideas: according to Hume, the latter "feels" so much like the former "perfect" identity that they are inevitably confounded. Hume's entire theory of identity would collapse in the absence of these facility feelings immanent to the imagination in transitions of thought together with the tendency to identify what feels the same to the contemplating imagination. See *HTC*, Part III for a detailed examination.

20 The same is true of consciousness generally, including the feeling of vivacity in virtue of which sensations and reflexions (passions, emotions, volitions) assume the value of "impressions" over against the less vivid "ideas" of thought: see *HTC*, chapter 1-B.

21 "Our impressions give rise to their correspondent ideas; and these ideas in their turn produce other impressions. One thought chaces another, and draws after it a third, by which it is expell'd in its turn." (T 261) See note 39 below, and also my analysis in *HTC*, chapter 6-C.

22 Real existence should be contrasted with possible existence, which, according to Hume, pertains to every conception, however fanciful (see T 32, 43, 89, 236, and 250). He also distinguished a second sense of "possibility", which can be ascribed to a thing whose real existence has been met with at least once in the past (see T 133, 135, and EHU 91).

23 Hume's uncharacteristic reiteration of the point that facility affect is the essence of relations suggests concern that readers might fail to appreciate what is, after all, a claim so astonishing that one is apt not to believe what one is seeing in the text before one. Alas, even this rare instance of heavy-handed repetition has proved futile, since one searches in vain for an interpreter who acknowledges even that this thesis is stated in the *Treatise,* much less that it is a cardinal tenet of Hume's philosophy, and interprets him accordingly. The moment one consents to take Hume at his word, however, a number of interpretive positions one meets regularly in the literature on

Hume forthwith cease to be creditable. For example, many interpreters suppose that Hume was an objectivist or realist about relations, or, at least, that there is nothing essential to his philosophy that would exclude his being so; but such a view clearly becomes untenable if, indeed, facility affect is essential to relation: we cannot, without absurdity, suppose facility felt in the passage of thought from perception to perception to exist outside and independently of thought—even in respect to perceptions themselves, considered apart from the idea-relating and -enlivening imagination that contemplates them. Hence, if facility is essential to the nature of relation, it follows immediately that the same absurdity applies to the notion that relations might exist objectively, outside and independently of thought. One simply cannot finesse this: the declaration that facility is essential to relation implies the most extreme subjectivism where relations are concerned (i.e., that they exist only in and for associative imagination).

What about those relations Hume termed *philosophical* (see T 13-15)? Precisely because no facility affect is present in them, belief (vivacity) would never follow them (for want of anything "natural and easy") did they not have a foundation in natural relations, whose "naturalness" consists precisely in the presence of facility affect. That is, philosophical relations must be thought of as parasitic on natural relations for their power to instill belief (vivacity affect), especially philosophical causal relations (see T 94). This reading of philosophical relations is further supported by the thesis of I iv 1 that "Belief, being a lively conception, can never be entire, where it is not founded on something natural and easy" (T 186): since vivacity (belief) follows facility, it is only insofar as philosophical relations are founded on natural (facile) ones that they can be supposed capable of influencing our thought and action. Thus, the question whether relations do or can exist independently of facility affect is, from a Humean standpoint, idle; for even if they did, they could not exert the least influence on our beliefs or actions, and so could not enter into the explanation of human understanding, passions, and will (indeed, they would recede into the background and count as mere "noise": see *HTC*, chapters 1 D, 2-D, and 5-E).

24 "Custom has two original effects upon the mind, in bestowing a facility in the performance of any action or the conception of any object; and afterwards a tendency or inclination towards it; and from these we may account for all its other effects, however extraordinary" (T 422). It is worth remarking, because so often overlooked (from at least Kant onwards), that Hume distinguishes custom from association (e.g., the relations of resemblance and contiguity, though associative, are not dependent on repeated experience and custom: see T 70, 73, and 168-169). Another source of confusion is Hume's use of the term 'experience' (so too Kant's term '*Erfahrung*', translated as 'experience'), since it carries a sense directly contrary to that favored by philosophers today: what for Hume is known by experience is precisely that which cannot be immediately apprehended, requiring instead repeated observation; so, for example, a sensation is not a datum of experience but of perception (i.e., immediate consciousness). See T 86-87, 111 (Hume's contrast between "qualities, which we observe in the object" and that which "'tis impossible to determine, otherwise than by

experience"), 112, 123, and 265.

25 Contrasted with the easy naturalness of habitual movements of thought is the "sensible violence" (T 125) we feel when these movements are blocked or otherwise impeded. Hume offers the example of thinking what will happen when a die is no longer supported by the box containing it: "the mind...cannot without violence regard it as suspended in the air; but naturally places it on the table, and views it as turning up one of its sides" (T 128).

26 For an extended exposition and defense of the interpretation outlined in this paragraph, see *HTC*, Part II, esp. chapter 5-E. Here, two remarks will have to suffice: (1) *Treatise* I iii 14 consists only of "evident deductions from principles, which we have already establish'd" (T 156). This means that we may not suppose that anything new, much less inconsistent with what came before, is to be found there. In particular, we should not forget that the primary, and sole introspectively accessible "original effect upon the mind" of custom is to *facilitate* the passage of thought, and this alone can enter into the impression-original of the idea of necessary connection. We should thus not be misled by Hume's use of the word "determination" in describing this impression, as for example: "upon the appearance of one of the objects, the mind is *determin'd* by custom to consider its usual attendant, and to consider it in a strong light upon account of its relation to the first object. 'Tis this impression, then, or *determination*, which affords me the idea of necessity" (T 156). Since a construal of this as a *real* determination, immediately witnessed by us, would obviate the need for an account of the origin of the idea of necessary connection such as Hume gave (in terms of experienced constant conjunction and custom), this way of construing 'determined' is an obvious non-starter. Yet, even at the introspective level we must careful to keep in mind that custom has no other "original effect" but to bestow "a facility in the performance of any action or the conception of any object" (T 422). We will then be wary of construing the "determination" of necessity as a *feeling* of determination, as some interpreters suggest (see *HTC*, chapter 5-A for examples). For if not outright question-begging (what could justify us in designating one feeling a "feeling of determination" but not another—say, a toothache or the animal *nisus* described at EHU 67n.?), it certainly has little to do with ordinary notions of habitual action, which are distinguished (i) by the ease with which they are performed and (ii) by never drawing any attention to themselves (tying shoelaces, speaking one's native tongue, or any activity one has mastered through long practice: "Such is the influence of custom, that, where it is strongest, it not only covers our natural ignorance, but conceals itself, and seems not to take place, merely because it is found in the highest degree," EHU 29-29). Since Hume's talk of "ease" and "natural and unforc'd" passages of thought is plainly intended to recall this usage, we should be cautious about letting our imaginations rove too widely at the mere mention of "determination" in connection with the impression original of the idea of necessary connection. For careful scrutiny of the text reveals a subtle shift (beginning on T 93, continuing on 102 and 104, and concluding on 108) from talk of the ease and smoothness of custom preempting the need for deliberative thought to talk of it as determining the course of thought and

belief. That is, the determinative aspect of causal relations stems from the customary ease which eliminates the need to "reflect on past experience" (93), "without any new reasoning or conclusion" (102), such that "the mind makes the transition without the assistance of memory" (104), to talk of the mind as "in a manner necessarily determin'd" (108) by custom, so that it "is always determin'd to pass from the impression to the idea, and from that particular impression to that particular idea, without any choice or hesitation" (110). Thus, the determinative character of custom, from which the necessity of causal relations derives, is nothing other than a transition of thought effected with maximal facility affect.

(2) It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the impression-original of necessary connection consists not only of the "determination" of custom but also of vivacity affect (see *HTC*, 181-3). For, according to Hume, the enlivening of ideas via customary association is the sole and entire means by which the compass of what we recognize as "reality" can be extended beyond the senses and memory to encompass even the outermost reaches of the physical universe (see T 108). For example, if I see smoke coming in over the transom, I not only think there is a fire beyond the walls of my office (the effect of custom per se), I believe it is really there, that is, I enliven my idea; thus does the world beyond these walls become just as real to me as what is in it. Because facility conceals itself from attention the more strongly it is felt (e.g., T 99, 305, 373), and since vivacity is by nature projective (a manner of conceiving an object, viz., regarding it as really existent), this, combined with the illusion Hume refers to on T 166, explains "why we suppose necessity and power to lie in the objects we consider, not in our mind, that considers them." For further discussion, see *HTC*, chapters 4-A and 5-E.

27 Wherever there is relation and belief, facility and vivacity affects are essential, including Hume's accounts of memory, the senses (T 265), space and time, and general representation. See *HTC* for an examination of each of these topics.

28 One of the primary sources of resistance to the interpretation of vivacity I offered in *HTC*—a feeling immanent to the *consciousness* that regards perceptions rather than a feature (quality) of *perceptions themselves*—is Hume's frequent employment of locutions like "the impression conveys its vivacity to an idea associated with it" (termed by Hacking the "mechanical model of vivacity," *Hume's Species*, 34). This qualm seems to me to depend on a construal of terms like 'conveyance' and 'transfer' that is both over-literal and heedless of context. Is it really credible that any philosopher, least of all Hume, would ascribe an intrinsic *power* to sensations and emotions to *effect* changes in the qualities of other perceptions, distinct from them—quite literally pouring (injecting, imbuing) their own vivacity into ideas related to them? (Are we then also to suppose that impressions, like the reservoirs of gasoline pumps, are thereby depleted of a certain amount of their own vivacity when they "pump" it into their related ideas?) Even a casual examination of the relevant texts should suffice to convince us that the context in which such language is employed is invariably that of associative imagination and its affectively colored passage along succeeding perceptions. For example, the very text that is most often cited as a case in point, wherein

Hume offers "as a general maxim in the science of human nature" the principle "that when any impression becomes present to us, it not only transports the mind to such ideas as are related to it, but likewise communicates to them a share of its force" (T 98), immediately leads him to a consideration of "the operations of the mind" and, most particularly, "its disposition, when it performs them." This disposition then becomes the true focus of the passage, especially in cases when the mind "passes easily and insensibly along related objects" and "the disposition has a much longer duration" than otherwise. In such a case, "the change of the objects is so easy, that the mind is scarce sensible of it, but applies itself to the conception of the related idea with all the force and vivacity it acquir'd from the present impression" (and this is immediately followed by the first statement of Hume's cardinal tenet that "facility of transition...is essential to it [i.e. to relation]"). Here, as in all of Hume's discussions of vivacity conveyance, the context leaves no doubt that vivacity is never *immediately* transferred from one perception (impression) to another (idea), but always only via the mediation of idea-relating and -enlivening imaginative consciousness (to which vivacity and facility affect are immanent). The point, then, is this: the locus of vivacity transference is the *consciousness* of the succession of the perceptions; it is this consciousness (here, imagination) that "feels" the passage as smooth, indifferent, or difficult, and is, accordingly, aware of relation or its absence. Any supposition that its locus is instead the *perceptions themselves*, such that vivacity would still be conveyed from one to the other even in the absence of an idea-relating and -enlivening imagination, is patently absurd and utterly unHumean. Indeed, Hume went to great pains in the Appendix to "guard against all mistakes in the readers" (T 623) by insisting that belief, as vivacity, be construed in terms of a "feeling to the mind." If interpreters would only consent to take him at his word, then they could not fail to recognize that it is no less nonsensical to say of a perception that it is *vivacious* than to say that it (rather than the passage of thought) is *natural and easy*. The associationalist context of affects as well as actions of imagination should never be forgotten or minimized. After all, it was in Hume's own eyes, his central contribution to philosophy (see T 661-662), and at its heart is a doctrine of imagination-immanent affect (facility and vivacity).

29 See note 23 regarding philosophical relations.

30 Human nature alone determines which passages will and which will not be the occasion of a "natural and easy" feeling in imagination. From a Humean perspective, it is perfectly conceivable that, had human nature been different, transitions which, with our current natures, we pay no heed to at all (which for us are mere "background noise"), might assume the same importance that resemblance, contiguity in space and time, and cause and effect have for us now. Nor is there any basis for supposing that such creatures would fare worse in the struggle for existence than humans, even though their notions of rationality, and so too their version of "science," would be incommensurate with ours.

31 It is seldom remarked that, quite apart from any question of cause and effect, relations of constant conjunction are themselves dependent on facility

affect. What after all is a relation of constant conjunction? A *conjunction* of perceptions is nothing more than their association by *contiguity* in time and/or place, and the *constancy* of a conjunction is simply the association of various conjunctions experienced over time by *resemblance*. If neither contiguity nor resemblance had the least "associating quality, by which one idea naturally introduces another" (T 10), Hume's associationist theory of of human understanding would predict that we would not take the least notice of regularities in our experience. Thus, for him, regularity itself has no *intrinsic* significance for belief and understanding, and a fortiori is not a whit more "real" or "objective" than cause and effect construed as customary association.

32 Hume was quite careful to establish his philosophical principles concerning the nature and workings of the mind in a manner conformable to his analysis of causal relations in terms of experience-bred customs. For instance, the copy-thesis—that all ideas are copied from impression originals—is presented as a causal relation founded on constant conjunction (see T 4-5). To suppose that Hume did this unwittingly, and never thought to apply the analysis of causal relations in I iii the workings of the mind itself, not only seems incredible but also is contrary to the text, since Hume in fact did so in the course of his analysis of personal identity:

> whether in pronouncing concerning the identity of a person, we observe some real bond among his perceptions, or only feel one among the ideas we form of them. This question we might easily decide, if we wou'd recollect what has been already prov'd at large; that the understanding never observes any real connexion among distinct objects, and that even the union of cause and effect, when strictly examin'd, resolves itself into a customary association of ideas. (T 259-260)

Hume then proceeds to apply this lesson to those causal relations whereby "our impressions give rise to their correspondent ideas; and these ideas in their turn produce other impressions" (T 261). Confirmation can be found in Hume's treatment of memory on T 105-106. For a discussion, see *HTC* 46-47, 51-54, 66-70, 94-96, and 226-232.

33 Hacking condemns Hume's psychological turn in the following terms: "Had he spoken not of different rivulets in the brain but of different levels of probability he would more readily have explained the failure of scepticism with regard to reason" (*Hume's Species*, 30). However, the question whether the better explanation of the failure of the skeptical arguments to convince is the one Hacking prefers, derived from the theory of probability, or that of Humean psychology is quite besides the point in relation to the interpretive question why Hume chose to highlight the primacy of affect in his theory of understanding at precisely this juncture. If my reading is correct—that skeptical arguments serve the larger purpose of establishing the primacy of facility as the "essence" of believable relation (thereby opening the way to the analysis of identity on T 202-204 and T 253-256)—then even if, as Hacking supposes, it fails to explain the fact the skeptical argument does not convince anyone, all that would follow is that Hume should have

omitted the argument and found some other way of establishing the primacy of facility. For what should by now be clear is that Hume's main purpose in I iv 1 was the establishment of its primacy.

34 In conformity with the point of I iv 1, the dilemma posed in I iv 7 places the emphasis on facility: "that singular and seemingly trivial property of the fancy, by which we enter with difficulty into remote views of things, and are not able to accompany them with so sensible an impression, as we do those, which are more easy and natural" (T 268).

35 Fogelin apparently overlooked the shift that occurs on T 184-185, from the second segment of I iv 1 to the third, concerned with the vulnerability of reason to skeptical argument *irrespective of how reason and belief are conceived.* For he thinks it Hume's "plain intention" to show "that only on his theory of belief can we explain (though not justify) the occurrence of any belief whatsoever" (*Hume's Skepticism*, 22). By contrast, if my analysis is correct, it would be more accurate to say that Hume used skeptical arguments (i) to prove that only if belief is construed as vivacity affect rather than as a simple act of thought can we explain how it is possible for us not to believe the conclusion of the skeptical argument (see note 8), and (ii) to prove that belief follows facility irrespective of constant conjunction and habit. Hume's basic purpose was therefore to highlight facility affect as the true, immanent arbiter of belief, which implies precisely the opposite conclusion to the one Fogelin arrives at. For, according to him, Hume's reasoning is independent of all considerations of "phenomenology," its "central point" being "that the feature that qualifies a perception as a belief is *causally* determined through a connection with immediate experience. It is this causal thesis, not the phenomenological thesis, that moves the argument along" (*Hume's Skepticism*, 177n9; note attached to the sentence from 22 cited above). Fogelin could not have advanced such a conclusion had he recognized that Hume's central concern in I iv 1 is actually with the primacy of facility affect, and, in particular, how it takes precedence over everything else having to do with cause and effect relations (experience, constant conjunction, habit) in determining belief. Thus, while Fogelin does take note of I iv 7 and recognizes that Hume's claim is that "understanding—when it acts alone—is thoroughly self-destructive" (21), he, like Morris and others, neglects the fact that it is facility affect alone ("a trivial property of the fancy"), and not the achievement of "a satisfactory equilibrium...through the balancing of causal factors" (21), that saves reason from destruction.

36 See T 425-426. The perspective of the imagination is shaped by custom and identity. Thus "the present situation of the person is always that of the imagination" (T 430); its world is "the system of realities" defined by custom and distinguished by that "force and settled order" which enables me to "paint the universe in my imagination" (T 108). See *HTC*, Chapter 6 and conclusion.

37 "The imagination passes easily from obscure to lively ideas, but with difficulty from lively to obscure. In the one case the relation is aided by another principle: In the other case, 'tis opposed by it (T 339).

38 "'Tis evident, that as we are at all times immediately conscious of

ourselves, our sentiments and passions, their ideas must strike upon us with greater vivacity than the ideas of the sentiments and passions of any other person" (T 339; see also 317 and 353).

39 Many Hume interpreters believe there is a conflict between his characterizations of the self in Books I and II of the *Treatise*, and several ingenious proposals have been advanced in an effort to resolve it. The reason is this: in I iv 6 and its recapitulation in the Appendix (T 633-636), Hume contends that the idea of self, like our idea of cause and effect, does not originate in an impression of any object, present either to external or internal perception antecedently to all association and custom, but on the contrary arises in and through our reflective consciousness of objects, whereas in Book II, Hume characterizes "the idea, or rather impression of ourselves" as being "always intimately present with us" (T 317, 320, 354), an object of which we have "an intimate memory and consciousness" (T 277). Among the conflicts supposed by commentators to exist between the self of the imagination characterized in Book I and the self of the passions featured in Book II are the following: (1) there is no impression of the self (I), there is such an impression (II); (2) the self is never present to us in experience (I), the self is always present to us (II); (3) the idea of the self is not an object but a mere fiction (I), the self is an object intimately present to us (II); (4) the self is an arcane idea known only to philosophical reflection (I); the self is an idea familiar to everyone (II); (5) the self is an idea that presupposes no idea of other selves or even external objects (I), the self by its very nature exists in a world of bodies and perhaps even other selves.

Hume himself betrays no indication, in either Books I and Ii or in the Appendix, of being troubled by any of the supposed conflicts identified by commentators. In my view, this is because none in fact exist, or at least nothing obliges us to suppose they do. To recognize that the self of the passions in Book II is the same as the self of the imagination in Book I, we merely have to appreciate the primacy of imagination-immanent affect in the theory of association developed in Book I and premised throughout Book II. When the self is introduced in Book II as that "succession of related ideas and impressions, of which we have an intimate memory and consciousness," we are told nothing that should not be evident from the explication of "the true idea of the human mind" in Book I as based on "a system of different perceptions or different existences, which are link'd together by the relation of cause and effect, and mutually produce, destroy, influence, and modify each other" (T 261). For, like any imperfect identity (the expression is used on 256 and contrasts with the perfect identity described on 203), the idea of the self arises when a uniform succession of *relations* of more or less continually varying ideas (252-253) is mistaken for a uniform succession of qualitatively indistinguishable (exactly resembling) ideas succeeding without variation or interruption. This mistake arises, according to Hume, because the "feel" in imagination characteristic of the smooth, easy transitions of the former is so similar to the feeling when contemplating the latter as to be effectively beyond our power to distinguish them (see 202-204 and 253-256). In particular, uniform causal relations yield the true idea of the human mind "by means of that easy transition they occasion" (262) as "our impressions

give rise to their corrwespondent ideas; and these ideas in their turn produce other impressions. One thought chaces after another, and draws after it a third, by which it expell'd in its turn" (261). These (facile) relations are constant features of the flux of perceptions in human (and animal) awareness (see T I i 2), from early infancy onward (the uniformity of nature was "perfectly familiar to me long before I was out of my cradle," EHU 39); and since facility is the essence of these custom-cred associations just as of every other relation, the smooth transitions (facility affects) are never absent from our consciousness even for a moment (though unnoticed, as it is the very nature of the facility affect characteristic of customary transitions [see T 422] "that, where it is strongest, it...conceals itself, and seems not to take place, merely because it is found in the highest degree" [EHU 28-29]). Since the idea of self originates in, and is nothing distinct from, the ever-present smooth transitions (the occasion of our confounding what is in truth a system of uniformly related yet kaleidoscopingly varying perceptions with the smooth transitions characteristic of invariant and uninterrupted perfect indentity relations), this is just to say that our feeling of self is indeed "always intimately present to us," something of which we have an "intimate memory and consciousness" every moment almost from the beginning of our conscious lives. Thus, when Hume's theory of association is understood in terms of imagination-immanent affect, it becomes evident that in I iv 6 we arrive at exactly the idea of self Hume utilizes in Book II as the object of the indirect passions and the focus of sympathy.

Hume's tendency to talk of an "impression" of the self may best be accounted for on the model of of his talk of ideas of memory as impressions early in Book I: memories are the equivalent of impressions (T 82) because their nearly equal degree of vivacity enables them to anchor causal inferences in reality (matters of fact) just as genuine impressions do (see T 82-83, 86, 89, 108, and 153). In the same way, Hume's talk of "the idea, or rather impression of ourselves" most likely derives from the intense, indeed unrivalled, vivacity of this idea ("our consciousness gives us so lively a conception of our own person, that 'tis not possible to imagine, that any thing can in this particular go beyond it," T 317; see also 339 and 353). That is, even more than memories, the vivacity of the idea of self so nearly approaches that of impressions it can, like these, anchor inferences and other facile transitions of the imagination.

Why is the idea of self the most lively idea we have of any object? Hume's neglect to explain the source of our belief in the fiction of personal identity, i.e., the vivacity of the idea, is regrettable, but the most plausible explanation is that the vivacity of the imperfect identity of the person (identity through variations) is to be understood, *mutatis mutandis*, on the same model as the imperfect identity of body (identity through interruptions): "as this propensity [to conflate the interrupted or the variable with perfect identity] arises from some lively impressions of the memory, it bestows a vivacity on that fiction; or in other words, makes us believe in the continu'd existence of body" or in the invariable existence of mind (see T 208-209). Moreover, since the fiction of body (continued, distinct existence) is possible only on the *presupposition* of the identity of the self (see T 206-208 and *HTC*, Chapter

7-A), the associational idea of self described in I iv 6 is necessarily even more primitive and vulgar a fiction than body (enough so as to lie well within the capacity of animals and to furnish the object for their indirect passions: see II i 12 and II ii 12). (For an analysis of Hume's second thoughts regarding personal identity, see my "Hume's Quandary Concerning Personal Identity," *Hume Studies* 18.2 [1992]: 233-253.)

So long as we accord facility and vivacity affect their proper place at the center of Hume's associationist conceptions of relation and real existence, there thus seems to be neither philosophical motivation nor textual warrant for supposing that Hume deployed a notion of the self in Book II different from that of I iv 6: the intimate consciousness, constant presence, and intense vivacity of the idea, or impression, of oneself are precisely what one should expect from the associational processes Hume adduced in explaining the origin of this idea.

40 II ii 4, "Of the love of relations," is replete with striking examples. In accounting for certain asymmetries in child-parent bonds then (and to some extent still) common in cases of second marriages, Hume relies on facility to distinguish perfect from imperfect relations:

> to produce a perfect relation betwixt two objects, 'tis requisite, not only that the imagination be convey'd from one to the other by resemblance, contiguity or causation, but also that it return back from the second to the first with the same ease and facility.... For supposing the second object, beside its relation to the first, to have also a strong relation to a third object, by means of the new relation, which presents itself, and gives a new impulse to the imagination. The fancy is by its very nature wavering and inconstant; and considers always two objects as more strongly related together, where it finds the passage equally easy both in going and returning, than where the transition is easy only in one of these motions. (T 355-356)

For example, when a mother in Hume's day remarried, "the ties of interest and duty bind her to another family, and prevent that return of the fancy from her to myself, which is necessary to support the union. The thought...goes with facility, but returns with difficulty." By contrast, since the imagination moves with greater ease from lesser to greater than from greater to lesser, when the thought goes to the father:

> His superiority prevents the easy transition of thought from him to his spouse, but keeps the passage still open for a return to myself along the same relation of child and parent. He is not sunk in the new relation he acquires; so that the double motion or vibration of thought is still easy and natural. (T 356)

Thus, once again: passions, just like vivacity, follow relations only insofar as facility is constitutive of them, but not otherwise.