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Abstract: Hume's sections on the reason of animals are considered. He claims that animals show what we find extraordinary sagacity, in nest building and migration, as well as needing to learn many things from experience, just as we do. He issues a challenge to any rival account of our own powers to do as well or better than he does in accounting for the continuities, and discontinuities, between animal and human cognitive achievements. Yet when he looks at our ability to recognize familiar lasting things, only in the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* does he allow that animals do this just as we do. Does his *Treatise* account of what exactly we do, noting constancies and coherence in our impressions, so overlooking interruption and disguising variation, fail his own touchstone?

At the end of part 3 of Book 1 of his *Treatise*,[1] Hume had given a touchstone by which to judge any account of the human mind, namely that, where other animals appear to display the same cognitive operation that we do, our account applies as well to them as to us.[2] He tests his own account of causal inference this way and finds that it comes through with flying colors, since the effects of experience of constant conjunctions on animal minds is just as he has claimed it to be on ours. Some of their actions, such as nest building and sitting on their eggs till they hatch, are "extraordinary instances of sagacity" (T 1.3.16.5; SBN 177), but on other matters, they, like us, learn from experience, so that the older one is, the more sagacious one tends to be.[3] He says we marvel at animal instinct, but the ability to learn from experience can also be called instinct, "a wonderful unintelligible instinct in our souls" (T 1.3.16.9;

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SBN 179). Just why Hume is so sure that we lack any extraordinary animal sagacity is unclear, perhaps just because we do find theirs extraordinary. As he says, "Nature may certainly produce whatever can arise from habit. Nay, habit is but one of the principles of nature, and derives all its force from that origin" (ibid.). If birds know, in advance of experience of having successfully done so, to fly to warmer climes in winter, might we not know, in advance of experience, say that our mothers' milk is fit to drink? Hume's dogmatic empiricism prevents him allowing that we might have ideas, and true beliefs about matters of fact, before any impressions. Yet he allows we do have instincts, such as kindness to children, and calls our ability to extrapolate experienced constancies itself an instinct. Is the habit of finding recognizable individual things in what we experience, as well as recognizable kinds of things, also an instinct, and is it one we share with other animals?

Hume says there that if any philosopher can give a better account of human and animal belief than his, which takes impressions to be the source of at least all human ideas and takes custom or habit to be the feature responsible for causal inference, he promises to "embrace their opinion." But in what follows, in part 4, when he looks at our belief in lasting bodies, he seems to forget this "decisive trial" (T 1.3.16.4; SBN 177) and proposes such a complex mental process to explain human belief in lasting things that it seems much too subtle to attribute to dogs and cats, or even to children. Animals show the ability to recognize their own kin, and their nests, just as we recognize our own families and homes, and can scarcely be supposed to have formed, as he claims we have, an idea or fiction of identity which is a medium between the ideas of unity and number, and which is applied to what we sense by our overlooking interruption and disguising variation. This account is applied both to the beliefs of "the vulgar," who take material objects to have the full panoply of sensed qualities, and to the Lockean philosophers, who distinguish such objects as they really are, with only primary qualities, from the way they appear to us, with smell, sound, and color, as well as shape and position. Hume's scorn is greatest for the philosophers, but his "Of scepticism with regard to the senses" applies also to the vulgar's beliefs, since sensory illusion and experiments like pressing the eyeball to double our world force us to make some distinction, even if not that of the Lockean philosophers, between how things seem on a given occasion, and what a correction of first appearance would show them to be. It is the philosophers who are found to have "a confusion of groundless and extraordinary opinions" (T 1.4.2.20; SBN 218), but all of us who, on the basis of the evidence of our interrupted impressions of objects, take them to have an uninterrupted existence are said to be under "a gross illusion," so the skepticism of the senses extends to everyone's beliefs about lasting objects.[4]

Such beliefs had not been examined before this section, so the only account of them we get is that imbedded in a skeptical attack. Although Hume's account of our causal inferences, as extrapolating past regularities into the future, has often

been called skeptical, and is so called by Hume himself in EHU,[5] in the *Treatise* it leads up to "[r]ules by which to judge of causes and effects." When it is referred to in part 4, it is not the so-called "problem of induction" which is the worry, but, in section 1, the likelihood of error, of our having broken his rules, and in the Conclusion, the clash between belief in lasting bodies and the causal investigation into the role of our sense organs in determining what we sense. We have no section in part 4 headed "Of scepticism with regard to causal inference." Nor had we, in part 3, any rules to tell us which really are lasting bodies or how to re-identify them. There is asymmetry in Hume's treatment of these two interlinked components of our beliefs. That they are interlinked is shown not just by his examples of causes and effects in part 3, but by his granting, early on in T 1.4.2, that it would be a "contradiction to experience" if he did not suppose that the stairway he is not now observing supported the porter who brings his letter, that the sea and continent he is not seeing were there for his letter to traverse by ferries and posts. We cannot keep our faith in causal constancies if we renounce our faith in re-identifiable lasting objects. The causal laws in a Berkeleyan world would be few and far between. If causal constancies often involve reference to lasting bodies, then the touchstone should have been applied to both.

In part 3, Hume had taken the persistence of such things as rivers, and other causes involving lasting things, for granted. Now in part 4 he is not describing our cognitive abilities, but looking at "sceptical and other systems of philosophy." But should he not, within part 3, have discussed our recognitional abilities, since these go hand in hand with our causal beliefs, and applied his touchstone to both? Or did he think he had done that, implicitly at least, since the cause-recognizing capacities he does apply it to were taken to be ones presupposing belief in lasting objects? But the only place he explicitly discusses our beliefs about what endures through time is in part 4, where he is giving vent to skeptical thoughts. Noone expects animals to be skeptics, so there is no reason for them to figure at all in part 4. Hume had allowed that the subtle subversion of reason which led him to skepticism about reason was not something anyone except a philosopher would be capable of engaging in, and, even then, that the "effort of thought" strained the imagination so much that not much conviction is produced by the argument about the higher order probabilities of errors in our reasoning, the fact that there are no obvious animal skeptics is no disproof of what he says can happen to human reasoners, once they realize their proneness to error and their tendency to underestimate that. (For the evidence to vanish to zero, it must be overconfidence which is being allowed for, not just fallibility.[6])

Animals do not, as far as we know, go in for reflex acts of the mind, so do not form estimates of their chances of error in their learning from experience. They do, like us, correct such errors as they become aware of. The burnt child, and dog, shuns the fire. So the fact that there are no animals who lose all confidence in their

sniffing and learning abilities does not mean that Hume's account of how we may at least momentarily do so fails his decisive trial. But recognizing familiar things is something all animals do, as do we all, and Hume's account of how we do that, by overlooking interruption and disguising variation, namely his four-part system described at T 1.4.2.25–43 (SBN 200–210), seems much too elaborate and employs ideas like time, duration, unity, number, and identity, as a medium between unity and number, which seem beyond animal minds. (It is unclear from what impressions he thinks even *we* can get the ideas of time and duration, which we obviously do have.) Yet if dogs can recognize their homes, and their owners, after an absence, why should we not suppose that at least the "unthinking part of mankind" do it in the same way that dogs do, without any subtle distinctions between perceptions and their objects, without any conscious noting of constancies in perceptions and coherence in their changes, and certainly without any postulation of double existences, since such beings will not be able to perform those "philosophical experiments" which supposedly force us to admit that our perceptions are mind-dependent. Hume allows that the unthinking do apply the idea of identity through time to what they sense, by a kind of instinct, whose mechanics he is trying to describe, but his description of it leaves our beliefs about bodies "a gross illusion" (T 1.4.2.20; SBN 217). Is the dog's recognition of his master also a gross illusion on the dog's part? Only if it misidentified him would its belief seem to be false. Of course we do not expect animals, without language, to have the concepts we use to describe their behavior, concepts like instinct and recognition. But we do expect them to have proto-concepts of master, of food, of prey. For them to take any of these as lasting bodies, Hume seems committed to saying they must think of identity over time as a medium between unity and number, and it is hard to see what this could amount to for an animal. That they might overlook interruption and disguise diversity does not involve attributing any of these concepts to them, so it might be plausible to think animals can do these things, indeed in EHU he says that they do. But in the *Treatise* the touchstone is not brought to bear on his account of such recognitional abilities, since he does not describe them in part 3, where it would have been natural to do so.[7]

Hume's elaborate part 4 attempt to describe our recognition of familiar bodies is not part of his science of human nature, but a prelude to his charge that our faith in lasting bodies is misplaced, that, for all we know, we encounter a series of momentary door-look-alikes, the dog just a series of master-look-alikes. It is as if the awareness that we may be wrong, claimed in the previous section to be typically underestimated, is now exaggerated in Hume's case, and he indulges in nightmare scenarios and thinks we are wrong on a massive scale. Not only us, but presumably all animals, though they cannot be quizzed as to what exactly they do believe. They treat their masters as the same, after absence, just as we treat our animals as the same, not just as looking just like the ones we saw before, but as really the same individuals. Why did he not treat such animal recognitional capacities, ours

included, as a case of ordinary sagacity, bound up with the ability to discern causes? A moment's thought would show that this capacity to recognize the familiar, not just the familiar kind but the familiar individual, is vital to the life form of most animals, certainly to our own, and whether or not it displays wisdom, we would be wise not to try to interfere with it. I have already noted that Hume had allowed early on in this distrustful section that it would be a contradiction to all our experience of constant conjunctions if the letter he received did not cross lasting lands and seas to reach him in the time it did, so our ability to anticipate what will happen next would be destroyed if our belief in lasting bodies were destroyed. For some of our more arcane beliefs about bodies, such as what their essential qualities are, we would not expect animal analogues, and nor may we attribute to them belief in their own lasting identities, but belief in lasting bodies they certainly display, so the decisive trial should have been made for them. Hume promised he would switch to the views of any philosopher whose views on our own capacities did better on this trial. Leibniz, for one, does better.[8] Not only does he allow that beasts can have a sort of shadow reason when they remember and learn from past experience, but his distinction between perception and apperception enables him to say why we have a concept of self which they, lacking apperception, may lack. (Of course Hume thinks peacocks show pride, so they may have some sort of sense of self, but not the anxious one he takes himself to have.[9]) So, should Hume convert to a Leibnizian monadology?

Did he so convert? One of the striking things about EHU is not just his avoidance of discussing our self conceptions and the reduction of his attention to our beliefs in bodies to a few sentences in section 12 but also his failure, in section 9, to repeat his challenge to others to do better than he does in describing how we and animals do what all of us seem to do. There is no promise to be found, in the EHU section "Of the reason of animals," of converting to another system if it does a better job of accounting for the similarities in human and animal performance, only the claim that any account gets "additional authority" if it does well on this. Then there is a new long note on the differences in capacity between human and other animals, and between some humans and others, but these do not include differences in recognitional capacity. In section 5, Hume had used the Leibnizian term "preestablished harmony" to describe how our (and animals') habits of thought track natural regularities. So maybe he did convert to Leibniz?[10]

In the reference he makes in EHU to our beliefs about bodies, he does allow that belief in an external world independent of our perceptions of it is instinctive, not just for us but also for "the animal creation" (EHU 12, 1.7; SBN 151); so, at least the animals get into the picture, as they did not in the *Treatise*.[11] He still calls this belief one which is "destroyed by philosophy," although the modern philosophers' substitute view cannot be defended, so he ends distrusting both instinct and philosophical reason. He does here implicitly subject his account to the decisive test, and

it would seem only his now-simplified account of the vulgar instinctive view, as belief in "an external universe which depends not on our perceptions, but would exist though we and every other sensible creature were annihilated" (EHU 1.2.1.7; SBN 151) will pass it. He had all along distinguished between the belief of the vulgar and that produced by philosophical reflection, but even the vulgar's belief, in the *Treatise*, had involved ideas too complex to attribute to animals, ideas of "distinct continu'd existence," of identity as a medium between unity and number. In EHU he develops his *Treatise* idea that our natural cognitive capacities can all be seen as species of instinct, so that both the beliefs we reach by causal inference and our belief in a durable mind-independent world, are seen as due to cognitive instincts. He gives up his own elaborate *Treatise* theory of vivacity transmission to explain how we form beliefs, including those that depend on causal inference, and instead just says we have an instinct to do this latter, as we are allowed also to have, to interpret our experience as giving us knowledge of lasting things.[12] Why he persists in calling this latter belief one destroyed by reflection is no clearer than it had been in the *Treatise*. (Was he a closet Berkeleyan? He did say that Berkeley's arguments admit of no answer, even though they produce no conviction.) He does not say we are prone to *misidentify* things, though sometimes of course we do. Perceptions are of course mind-dependent and can sometimes mislead. But they are also world-dependent and, in general, do track features of the world around us. So if both we and other living animals take there to be such a lasting mind-independent world and would lose most of our confidence in our knowledge of causes if that belief were suspended, then it is the reliability of our reflective philosophical doubts that should be queried, not our faith in our ability to recognize what is lasting in our world. Hume had allowed that our reason is fallible, not least when it tries to perform higher-than-animal inferences. His own is also fallible. He knows and says that the Lockean philosopher's system is no better than that of the "vulgar," and animals manage just fine on that same "instinctive" vulgar belief. It is the belief that what we take to be continuants are, by and large, really continuants, and, if they are not, we will soon learn that, should they disappear on us, then reappear. Neither the vulgar nor animals have any firm views about what are the essential properties of material things. All that it is safe to assume there, for those of us able to raise the question, is that they are properties which explain their appearance to us, powers to give us the impressions that we get. Of course if Hume is right about the concept of power, we must give a very weak dispositional analysis of these powers of bodies. They are some things, we know not exactly what, which cause us to get the impressions of them that we do get.

Hume' *Treatise* account of our belief in lasting things was not subjected to his own decisive trial, and it is dubious it would pass it. He did not quite acknowledge this in EHU, but he does allow that this persistent and reverberating belief is one shared with the "animal creation," so his touchstone should have been applied.

Or did his skepticism about reason apply to his own reasoning about animal and human reason? Was his belief in his touchstone, and in his part 3 system of the human mind, among those which vanished to zero? They may have, momentarily, but seem to have survived into EHU, with a few revisions.

But is it just anthropomorphic of me to take it for granted that my cat recognizes me as the same one who fed him earlier, not just as a very similar food provider?[13] He does act differently to me from the way he acts to those who come in to feed him when I am away. He accepts the food they offer but is distrustful of their caresses. Still, they do not look exactly like me, so how do I know he takes me to be a continuant, rather than one whose appearance today is just like that of yesterday's food provider? Well, he knows my body lasts all night as he rests beside me, and he expects my return after any absence (even supervises my backing of the car into the garage). Of course I cannot know whether he is a Berkeleyan and takes me to be just the class of my appearances to him, rather than a continuant, but the natural view to take is that what we naturally take to be continuants really are so. I take him to be one and the same loving companion, and I am willing to bet he reciprocates. For we do not get to love recurrent things in the way we love familiar loved ones. My cat is quite passionate about his regular meals, but he does not fondle them, as he does me. We too react quite differently to what we take as continuants from the way we act to what we take to be passing look-alikes. We may enjoy the latter, when they are pleasurable, but we do not love them. Hume, when he treats of our passions, is quite clear that we take ourselves, and many of our possessions, as really lasting things and would feel no pride in anything thought to be merely an ephemeral possession (T 2.1.6.7, SBN 293). And of course, when we love, we take the ones we love to last between our different meetings with them, just as we assume we do. Simplicity favors the view that we really do encounter, and recognize, continuing things. To attribute Berkeleyan doubts to animals would be quite absurd. So I conclude that Hume's *Treatise* account of our own belief in lasting bodies was not subjected to his own decisive trial and might well fail it. He did not make the trial, since he delayed looking at this belief until part 4, when he was looking for reasons for distrust and skepticism.

Hume had called our own reason an instinct, and it includes not just our causal inferences and the beliefs based on them and our interpretation of the world around us but also those reflex acts of the mind which led him to his skeptical worries. Do we have an instinct to make such reflex acts, to engage in thoughts about thoughts, as well as thoughts about more mundane matters? Our having language does give us the ability to express a thought, ready for critical examination, and so if we have an instinct to talk, we may well also be instinctive critics of thought. In his long footnote to EHU 9, Hume credits some of us with the ability to investigate a "complication of causes" to understand "the whole system of objects" and also says we have a tendency to confuse ideas when we engage in long trains

of thought. Conversation and books are said to enlarge our knowledge, but the crucial fact that our thought gets verbal expression is not sufficiently emphasized, as the root cause of the difference between our minds and those of animals who have no language. "Reason and reflection" are often paired by Hume, but the link between reflective thought and language is, as far as I know, never discussed by him, despite the fact that the meanings of the words on page 1 of the *Treatise* were his first example of what he means by "ideas." He does emphasize the dependence of moral reflection on our possession of a special moral vocabulary, but that all reflection depends on language is not something he seems to realize, any more than do Leibniz or Kant, unless we take Kant's metaphysical deduction of the categories to make thought dependent on sentence forms. Even before we make judgments, the very resemblances we recognize, and the sorts of continuants we find, depend a lot on the language we have learned. As Hume allows, our abstract ideas involve reference to some "term." When Hume looked out his window at Yvandeau, he saw hills and fields, not just varied colors and shapes. And who knows what a dog who looks out the window sees? The minds of other animals may be more opaque to ours than we like to think. Rilke speaks of their gaze in his eighth Duino Elegy:

> Ware Bewusstheit unserer Art in dem
> sicheren Tier, das uns entgegenzieht
> in anderer Richtung—riss es uns herum
> mit seinen Wandel. Doch sein Sein is ihm
> unendlich, ungefasst und ohne Blick
> auf seinen Zustand, rein, so wie sein Ausblick.[14]

Hume's touchstone depends on his confidence that he has some insight into what animals can and cannot do, on his faith that the reason of animals is not alien to our own, despite their supposedly having forms of sagacity that we lack. But if animal thought is unaffected by linguistic categories, then we may be merely deluding ourselves that we understand their understanding, unless our memories go back to our own infant pre-speech thought, "unintrospective, pure," so we can recall what sort of thoughts we had before we had words in which to utter our thoughts and can recall what sort of sea change that brought.

NOTES

I thank the editors of *Hume Studies*, past and present, and those they consulted, for many valuable suggestions.

1 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary Norton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), abbreviated "T" in the text and cited by Book, part, section, and paragraph number, followed by the page number in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed., revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), abbreviated "SBN" in the text.

2 As Michael J. Seidler has emphasized in "Hume and the Animals," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 15 (1977): 361–72, Hume's "experimental" method commits him to supposing like effects to have like causes, so to generalizing his account of our nature to animal nature, where the behavior is similar. Seidler's main concern is with how this method is applied in Book 2.

3 See Deborah Boyle, "Hume on Animal Reason," *Hume Studies* 29.1 (2003): 3–28, for an examination of what Boyle terms Hume's analogy between human and animal reason. Boyle refers us to a fairly extensive earlier literature on this topic, but neither she nor those she refers to specifically discuss Hume's touchstone. For my own earlier discussion of this general topic, see "Knowing our Place in the Animal World," in *Postures of the Mind* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 139–56. Hume's views on animals are discussed at 146–51.

4 For a lucid guide through this difficult section, I recommend Robert J. Fogelin's in *Hume's Skeptical Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), chap. 4. As Fogelin points out, Hume begins saying that we must take for granted that there are bodies, and his concern will be only with the causes of this belief, but the section enacts a "downward trajectory" (84) and Hume ends without the implicit faith in his belief in body, with which he began. "I cannot conceive how such trivial qualities of the fancy, conducted by such false suppositions can ever lead to any solid and rational system" (T 1.4.2.20; SBN 217).

5 David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), abbreviated "EHU" in the text and cited by section and paragraph, followed by the page number in *Enquiries Concerning the Principles of Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), abbreviated "SBN" in the text.

6 Robert J. Fogelin points out in *Hume's Scepticism in the* Treatise of Human Nature (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 16–20, that if the estimate is simply of any error, then it will be an empirical matter what these probabilities (frequencies) are, and they will converge on a limit, not on zero. Fogelin reconsiders Hume's argument in *Hume's Skeptical Crisis*, 40–48, and is still very critical of it. But it is clear that Hume thought that we have a bias to *underestimate* our own rate of error, so a progressive correction of these "unphilosophical probability" estimates, at higher orders, would lead to a "total extinction of belief and evidence." Charity demands that we take the higher level estimates, like the lower level ones, to be of the chance not just that we erred, but also that we erred in underestimating how error-prone we are.

7 One might have expected T. H. Huxley to note that Hume fails to apply his touchstone to his account of our belief in a lasting world, but he does not discuss part 4 of Book 1, nor part 12 of EHU. He is himself quite clear, in chapter 6 of *Hume, With Helps towards the Study of Berkeley* (New York and London, D. Appleton and Company, 1902, republished Bibliolife LLC) what a difference language makes, but he praises Hume, in

chapter 5, for seeing that some sort of thought can go on without it, and in particular, that causal inference can.

8 Kant, I think, does much worse, since any experience of the world seems impossible for animals if they lack the unity of apperception. It is almost as if Hume foresees the Kantian account of our thought when he formulates his touchstone.

9 Maybe his touchstone should also have been applied to his account of our sense of self. If peacocks can be proud without constructing themselves out of their own perceptions, surely we can also. Thanks to Gabriele Taylor for reminding me of Hume on the pride of peacocks.

10 For a comparison of his position with that of Leibniz, see P. J. E. Kail, "Leibniz's Dog and Humean Reason," in *New Essays on David Hume*, ed. Emilio Mazza and Emanuele Ronchetti (Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2007), 65–80. Kail leaves aside "extraordinary instances" of sagacity and concentrates on causal reasoning.

11 Annemarie Butler, in "Natural Instinct, Perceptual Relativity, and Belief in the External World in Hume's *Enquiry*," *Hume Studies* 34.1 (2008): 115–58, recognizes this new *Enquiry* treatment of the belief as instinctive, as well as the fact that the perceptual relativity argument had not been given in the *Treatise*.

12 See Martin Bell, "Belief and Instinct in the First Enquiry," in *Reading Hume on Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Millican (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 175–86. Bell thinks Hume wants to insulate the instinct to make causal inferences to new beliefs from the instinct to take our experience to be of continuants, so did not discuss the two instincts together. (The former are discussed in EHU 5.2, the latter in EHU 12.1.) But, of course, our causal inferences are usually formulated in terms of lasting objects, such as the door, letter, stairs, and oceans he had given at T 1.4.2.20 (SBN 196–97). Our causal regularities are mostly not between perceptions, but between the action of lasting things like doors and stairs.

13 For an examination of what cats can do, see C. Dumas "Object Permanence in Cats (Felis Catus), an Ecological Approach to the Study of Invisible Displacements," *Journal of Comparative Psychology* 106.4 (1992): 404–4 10. I thank the editors of *Hume Studies* for this reference. Dumas is concerned with cats' persistence in looking for objects they have lost, like balls under furniture, with their level of conviction that objects cannot just disappear.

14 "Were our consciousness to exist in the confident animal that moves toward us, upon a different course, it would drag us round in its wake. But its own being, for it, is infinite, inapprehensible, unintrospective, pure, like its outward gaze."