CHAPTER-VII

AN EVALUATION OF HUME'S EMPIRICISM

We all feel, on reading Hume, that something is wrong with his internal impression of necessity. How does he know that others have the same feeling as he finds in himself? Would it affect his general position if it were shown experimentally that many people get a feeling of inevitability the very first time they observe certain types of causal process, say communication of motion by impulse? Would this be an 'a priori' knowledge of causal powers? And suppose some people felt such an impression in cases where there was in fact no causal connection?¹

Hume's intentions, according to a familiar legend, were of a distinctly dishonourable kind. He tells us himself that his ruling passion was a 'love of literary fame'; but that, according to his detractors, is too favourable a description of his motives. 'Hume exhibits no small share of the craving after mere notoriety and vulgar success as distinct from the pardonable, if not honourable, ambition for solid and enduring fame, which would have harmonized better with his philosophy.'²

It is particularly invoked to explain why, as the charge is commonly formulated, Hume 'abandoned philosophy' after the Treatise, 'turning to those political and historical topics which were likely to yield, and did in fact yield a much better return of that sort of success which his soul loved.' The Treatise had not the stuff of notoriety in it, and so he turned his attention away from philosophy to theology and moral science. 'Since he couldn't shock men by a new theory of science, he would try politics and religion'.³

The most powerful reply to Hume—indeed, the only competent attempt to
refute his philosophy as a whole— came from one of a group of scholars in Aberdeen who had formed themselves into a philosophical society. Of this group Thomas Reid, a professor in King’s College, was the most notable member, and he was the founder of the school of Scottish philosophy known as the Common Sense School. With him were associated George Campbell and James Beattie, professors (the former afterwards principal) in Marischal College, as well as other men of mark in their day. The earliest contribution to the controversy—Campbell’s Dissertation on Miracles (1763)—dealt with a side issue; but it is of interest for its examination of the place of testimony in knowledge; whereas experience leads to general truths and is the foundation of philosophy, testimony is the foundation of history, and it is capable of giving absolute certainty. Campbell’s later work, The Philosophy of Rhetoric (1776), contains much excellent psychology. Beattie’s Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth (1770) is not a work of originality or of distinction; but it is a vigorous polemic; it brought him great temporary fame, and he has been immoralised by the art of Reynolds as serenely clasping his book whilst Hume and other apostles of error are being hurled into limbo. About the same time James Oswald, a Perthshire clergyman, published An Appeal to Common Sense in behalf of Religion (1766-72). Reid, Beattie, and Oswald were placed together by Priestley for the purpose of his Examination; and the same collocation of names was repeated by Kant; but it is entirely unjust to Reid.4

Reid’s Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense was published in 1764; in the same year he removed to Glasgow to fill the chair vacated by Adam Smith. His later and more elaborate work—Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man—appeared in 1785 and 1788 respectively. In his philosophical work Reid has the great merit of going to the root of the matter, and he is perfectly fairminded in his criticism. He admits the validity of
Hume's reasonings; he does not appeal to the vulgar against his conclusions; but he follows the argument back to its premises and tests the truth of this premises. This is his chief claim to originality. He finds that the sceptical results of Hume are legitimate inferences from 'the ideal theory' which Locke took over from Descartes, and he puts to himself the question, "what evidence have I for this doctrine, that all the objects of my knowledge are ideas in my own mind?" Reid gave Hume credit for taking Locke's premises to their logical conclusion. Since the result was patently absurd it followed that something had gone wrong at the start. The principal error, as Reid saw it, was the adoption by Locke and his followers of the theory of ideas: the assumption that what is immediately perceived, whether it be called an idea, as by Locke, or a sensible quality, or, as Hume preferred, an impression, is something that has no existence apart from the perceptual situation in which it figures. If we reject this assumption, as indeed most philosophers now do, and follow common sense both in taking for granted the existence of persons to whom perceptual acts can be attributed, and in taking these persons to be directly acquainted through their senses with one and the same world of physical objects, which exist independently of being perceived, then Hume's scepticism may not have been met in every detail, but at least its most outrageous features will have been obliterated.

'The Ideal Theory' had made two assumptions which were acknowledged and formulated by Hume: (1) "that all our distinct perceptions [i.e., impressions and ideas] are distinct existences."); and (2) "that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences." Hume found himself unable "to renounce either of them"; but Reid rejects them both. He maintains that 'the ideal system' went wrong at the outset by assuming that bare ideas are primary data and that we must first get these and then proceed to make
judgements about them. "Nature does not exhibit these elements separate, to be compounded by us." Not the simple idea, but judgement is the unit: "The simple apprehension [of the idea] is performed by resolving and analysing a natural and original judgement." This judgement, belief, or knowledge accompanies sensation, and it cannot be defined any more than sensation can; but "every operation of the senses, in its very nature, implies judgement or belief as well as simple apprehensions." 7

This criticism brings out the point that Locke and Hume have mistaken the results of their psychological analysis for primary data of experience, and have thus fallen into the unwarranted assumption that these results—the ‘simple ideas’ of Locke, the ‘impressions’ of Hume—are distinct existences. And there is another ambiguity in the use of the ‘idea’ on which Reid lays stress. It may mean either the operation of the mind or the object of that operation; and the two meanings are confused by Hume, as indeed his system does not allow of his distinguishing them. Now, it is the idea as object whose existence Reid calls in question. "The ideas," he says, "of whose existence I require the proof, are not the operations of any mind, but supposed objects of those operations." And he denies the existence of any such "images of external things" in the mind. 8

Hume considered that the senses give us our only real knowledge. All our knowledge of external world arises from sense perception. Every meaningful expression about the world refers to experience. Every idea in our minds derives ultimately from an impression received from the external world, or from some relation between ideas so received. Derived from Locke this is the doctrine of unem nomen, unem nominatum: one name, one thing. Hume wrote, "First, when we analyze our thoughts or ideas, however compounded or sublime, we always find that they resolve themselves into such simple ideas as
were copied from a precedent feeling or sentiment. Even those ideas, which, at first view, seem the most wide of this origin, are found, upon a nearer scrutiny, to be derived from it. The idea of God, as meaning an infinitely intelligent, wise, and good Being, arises from reflecting on the operations of our own mind, and augmenting, without limit, those qualities of goodness and wisdom. We may prosecute this enquiry to what length we please; where we shall always find, that every idea which we examine is copied from a similar impression.” To refute Hume you must produce some idea which cannot be traced back to a preceding sense impression, and this Hume holds, you cannot do. He divides our knowledge into what we know by means of impressions of sense and what we know by means of comparison of ideas. Our ideas are copies of sense impressions, being less strong, or lively, or vivacious. Whatever piece of knowledge we think that we have which cannot be traced back either to a sense impression or to a comparison of relation of ideas, is fraudulent and not knowledge at all.10

A more crucial element in Hume’s account of impression is his taking them all to be ‘internal and perishing existences’. The argument with which he supports this view are, as is frequently the case with Hume, a mixture of the logical and the experimental. The experiments which are supposed to ‘convince us that our perceptions are not possessed of any independent existence’ are those which typically figure in philosophical literature under the ill-chosen heading of ‘the argument from illusion’. The opinion, for which there is factual evidence, ‘that all our perceptions are dependent on our organs, and the disposition of our nerves and animal spirits ...... is confirmed by the seeming increase and diminution of objects, according to their distance; by the apparent alterations in their figure; by the changes in their colour and other qualities from our sickness and distempers; and by an infinite number of other experiments of the same kind.”11
Quite apart from the question whether Hume is entitled, on his premises, to draw in this way upon physics and physiology, the argument is plainly not conclusive against opponents like Reid who take the common-sense view that in the normal exercise of sense-perception we are immediately presented with physical objects. It is not conclusive, because their position need not commit them either to denying that our perceptions are causally dependent upon a number of factors besides the existence of the object perceived, or to maintaining that we always perceive things as they really are. According to Ayer, that Hume would have done better to rely on his purely logical argument that it is self-contradictory to suppose that an entity which is defined as the content of a particular perception can lead a separate existence of its own. In short, impressions are made ‘internal and fleeting’ by fiat.12

For reasons which will soon become apparent, Hume’s principal concern was with ideas, but the accounts which he gives of his use of the term idea are cursory and inadequate. In the Treatise he says that he means by ideas the ‘faint images’ of impressions ‘in thinking and reasoning’.13 In the Abstract he says: ‘when we reflect on a passion or an object which is not present, this perception is an idea. Impressions, therefore are our lively and strong perceptions: ideas are the fainter and weaker’. Very much the same account is given in the Enquiry, except that the order of the explanations is reversed. The subject is introduced by the remark that ‘we may divide all the perceptions of the mind into two classes of species, which are distinguished by their different degrees of force and vivacity’.14

The reason why, Ayer said that these explanations are inadequate is not that they carry the false assumption that the work of concepts, which is what ideas perform for Hume, is always carried out by images. It is rather that the emphasis is laid on the wrong factor. Let us consider, for the sake of argument,
the case where the thought of some passion or sensation does take the form of an image. Now it may or may not be the case that the image is intrinsically less vivid than the passion or sensation was when it occurred. The point is that no degree of vividness or faintness can endow it with a reference beyond itself. To be an image of the passion or of the sensation, it has to be interpreted as a symbol; it has to give rise to a belief not in its own existence but in the existence of what it represents; and then the question of its own comparative intensity becomes irrelevant.  

Accordingly, these point can be clearly illustrated by the example of memory. As it happen, Hume has very little to say about memory. He speaks of it as a faculty by which we repeat our impressions, though of course it is not possible, on his view, that any impression should literally be repeated, and says that what is reproduced in memory is something which, in respect of its vivacity, 'is somewhat betwixt an impression and an idea'. In general, he appears to take it for granted that memory is reliable, at last with respect to recent event. He puts the data of memory very much on a level with the immediate data of sense-perception, as sources of knowledge which serve as a basis for more venturesome inferences, and we shall see that it is our right to make these venturesome inferences that he is primarily concerned. What is of interest in the present context is the way in which Hume distinguishes between ideas of memory and the ideas of the imagination. According to a fundamental principal of Hume's, which we shall presently examine, both must be derived from previous impressions, but whereas memory, so long as it is functioning properly, 'preserves the original form in which its objects were presented,' as well as the order in which they originally occurred, the imagination, so long as it remains within the realm of past impressions, is free to arrange their counterparts in any order and combine them in any way it pleases, whether or not
these combinations have actually occurred. There is, however, the difficulty, for the most part ignored by Hume, but mentioned by once in passing, that we cannot return to our past impressions to discover where this difference obtains. Consequently, the only way we actually have to distinguishing memory from imagination ‘lies in its superior force and vivacity’; the same terms as are used in the Enquiry to distinguish impressions from ideas. By comparison with the ‘lively and strong’ ideas of memory, the ideas of the imagination are “faint and languid.”16

Here, again, Ayer says that “Hume was right in so far as there is only a difference of ‘tone’ between one’s memory of a past experience and one’s imaginative reconstruction of an experience which one truly believes to have occurred, but he was mistaken if he took this to be the only or even the main point at issue.”17

There is a further complication in the doctrine of impressions, according to Fraser Cowley, which is closely connected with the hypostatisation of the image. Though Hume frequently identifies impressions with qualities or properties of things in the same way as Locke and Berkeley — colour, taste, smell, texture, visual and tactual shape — he is convinced for much the same physiological reasons as Berkeley that “our sight informs us not of outness,” i.e., that any visual impression is in two dimensions, or at least “originally” in two dimensions. It is a flat patchwork of colours. Hence that impression which would correspond, for example, to the appearance of the side of a house in the field of vision is held to be determinate in size. This view leads to what Cowley call the illusion of real appearances. For any appearance of the house is simply the way it there looks to me here, the way I see it. But Hume’s doctrine of the visual impression hypostatises the look of the house and holds
that this is determinate in quantity or size. But, as Cowley shall argue, only the house can be measured in any way and only it can be said to be of determinate size in any dimension.\^18

Hume's theory of impressions and ideas is not like some sense - datum theories which purport to be just another way of talking about what in the ordinary way we say we see or hear or feel, and which are to be justified simply by their convenience, utility and unambiguousness. For Hume, we believe we see things, bodies, material existents. But there are not what is given. We take our perceptions to be our only objects, "'and suppose, that the very being, which is intimately present to the mind, is the real body or material existence.'" The bodies and the impressions are the same: the bodies are simply what we believe the impressions to be, but there is nothing but the impressions.\^19

Yet Hume maintains paradoxically that "'all sensations are felt by the mind, such as they really are, and that when we doubt, whether they present themselves as distinct objects, or as mere impressions, the difficulty is not concerning their nature, but concerning their relations and situations.'"\^20

Here, Cowley say "'paradoxically'" for we obviously do not feel them as they really are; we take them for bodies. Again Hume states:

"'For since all actions and sensations of the mind are known to us by consciousness, they must necessarily appear in every particular what they are, and be what they appear. Every thing that enters the mind, being in reality a perception, 'tis impossible anything should to feeling appear different. This were to suppose, that even where we are most intimately conscious, we might be mistaken.'"\^21

The common injunction not to take Hume too literally is a bad one. It is not his expression but his doctrine that is difficult. In these passages, the difficulty
is of a fundamental nature. If sensations were felt as they really are, how would the vulgar ever take them for external bodies? By reason of "their relations and situations". Sensations are what they are and what they appear, irrespective of their relations to other sensations. Relations are purely external. But the vulgar are not conscious of some of their sensations as such; they suppose them to be bodies, and in this they are, in a sense, mistaken. The sensations as they really are "known to us by consciousness". Consciousness in this context must, according to Cowley, be the reflexive consciousness, and Hume seems to be asserting in Cartesian fashion that it is certain and indubitable.22

The doctrine of impressions and ideas can only be understood historically as the late and sophisticated product of two centuries of physical, physiological and philosophical theory. To cite the evidence of our intimate consciousness is pure sleight of hand. What we are alleged to be intimately conscious of is actually deduced from this elaborate body of theory. It is perhaps unduly to rationalise Hume's position to say that he persuaded himself that what must, according to the theory, be presented to consciousness, was presented to consciousness. The difficulty was that the vulgar did not know it: they thought their sensations were qualities of bodies — the grass was green, the sky was blue, the sack heavy, the ditch foul-smelling.23

This being so, Hume, try as he might to stick to the direct evidence, had to fall back on the scientific premises of the doctrine, though without always realising what he was doing. He had to say that "colours, sounds, etc., are originally on the same footing with the pain that arises from steel, and pleasure that proceeds from a fire."24 Where the meaning of "originally" is clearly "when we first have them". The evidence for this could not be direct. It could only be in terms of the theory from which the doctrine originated.25
Having fixed his attention on ideas, Hume proceeds to review the ways in which they are associated. He has presented a very careful analysis of knowledge—situation. Philosophers had taken mathematics to be the paradigm case of knowledge and had derived philosophical methodology from their study of mathematics. At least two things can be said about mathematics. Firstly, the discovery of axioms and, secondly the process of deducing theorems and other conclusions are said to be intuitively certain and self-validating. Philosophers by patterning empirical knowledge of matters of fact hoped to obtain scientific principles from intellectual vision. However, factual propositions are based on experiments and are not obtained by sheer thinking alone (as in the case with mathematics), then how can factual propositions be explained in terms of intellectual intuition? 26

Well, experimental data may be taken to be the occasion for the rise of an intellectual insight into the laws of Uniformity of Nature and the Principle of Causation, which in turn guarantee the indubitable truth of external facts. As against this some philosophers contended that observed experimental data and scientific methodology themselves provided indubitable truth. In both the cases mathematicising consisted in holding that intuitive insight into the fundamental principles of nature guaranteed certainty in knowledge. 27

Against these mathematicising attempts of philosophers, Hume contended the following: 28

1. Propositions of mathematics differ in kind from propositions concerning matters of fact. Naturally factual propositions cannot be confused with mathematical propositions. In other words, mathematical certainty with regard to factual propositions cannot be obtained or demonstrated.

2. No amount of observation or experiment can guarantee the truth of
future events. Nay, every rational attempt to base factual proposition on uniformity of nature did the law of causation is bound to fail.

3. Even the certainty of mathematical reasoning cannot be ultimately guaranteed because of the frailty of the judging powers of man.

4. However, Hume holds that man is not guided by reason alone. Nature, custom and habits determine human thinking. This natural propensity in man leads him to believe in causal relation, external world moral principles and God.

We shall be very brief about Hume's theory of mathematics and shall take up (2) concerning Hume's theory of substance, causality and external world. Points (3), and (4) will be included under Hume's scepticism.29

In the Treatise Hume distinguishes seven different kinds of philosophical relation, which he divides into two groups according as they can or cannot be 'the objects of knowledge and certainty'.30

![Relations Diagram]

Fig.1. Table : Seven kinds of relations

This division between relations prefigures the second of Hume's fundamental principles, which is that "All the objects of human reason or enquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds, to wit, Relations of Ideas, and
Matters of Fact.'" In this proposition, which is taken from the Enquiry, affirmations concerning relations of ideas are treated as being purely conceptual, and consequently as being 'either intuitively or demonstratively certain'. They include the sciences of geometry, algebra and arithmetic. Hume has next to nothing to say about them, his own interest lying in our beliefs about matters of fact. This leads him, in the Enquiry, to reduce his list of relations to three, "namely Resemblance, Contiguity in time and place, and Cause and Effect.'" The first two are merely principles of association. The important relation is that of Cause and Effect, on which, as Hume puts it, all reasonings concerning matters of fact seem to be founded.

Finally, for Hume only two kinds of propositions are literally meaningful, which is clear from the following oft-quoted line: "When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter and existences? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."

This passage, startling and ruthless as it sounds, is chiefly remarkable for its reservations. It was easy to condemn "divinity or school metaphysics" as illusory; they had for long been common game. But to challenge the validity of mathematics or of natural science was quite another matter. Hume did not temper the wind to the shorn lamb; but he took care that it should not visit too roughly the sturdy wethers of the flock. Yet we have seen that, according to his principles, mathematics rests upon observations which fall short of accuracy, while natural science, with its "experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact," depends upon the relation of cause and effect.
The examination of this relation occupies a central position in both his works; and its influence upon subsequent thought has been so great as sometimes to obscure the importance of other factors in his philosophy. He faced a problem into which Locke had hardly penetrated, and of which even Berkeley had only a partial view. What do we mean when we say that one thing is cause and another thing its effect, and what right have we to that meaning? In sense - perception we have impressions of flame and of heat, for instance; but why do we say that the flame causes the heat, what ground is there for asserting any "necessary connection" between them? The connection cannot be derived from any comparison of the ideas of flame and of heat; it must come from impression, therefore; but there is no separate impression of 'cause' or 'causation' which could serves as the link between two objects. What then is the origin of the connection? To use the terminology of the Enquiry, since cause is not a "relation of ideas," it must be a "matter of fact" — an impression. But it is not itself a separate or simple impression; it must therefore be due to the mode or manner in which impressions occur. In our experience we are accustomed to find flame and heat combined; we pass constantly from one to the other; and the custom becomes so strong that, whenever the impression of flame occurs, the idea of heat follows. Then we mistake this mental or subjective connection for an objective connection. Necessary connection is not in the objects, but only in the mind; yet custom is too strong for us, and we attribute it to the objects.\textsuperscript{36}

This is a simple statement of the central argument of Hume's most famous discussion. The "powers" which Locke attributed to bodies must be denied — as Berkeley denied them. The consciousness of spiritual activity on which Berkeley relied is equally illusory on Hume's principles. "If we reason a priori", say Hume, "anything may appear able to produce anything. The
falling of a pebble may, for aught we know, extinguish the sun, or the wish of a man control the planets in their orbits.” This striking utterance is, strictly, little better than a truism. No philosophers ever supposed that such knowledge about definite objects could be got in any other way than by experience. But Hume’s negative criticism goes much deeper than this. We have no right to say that the extinction of the sun needs any cause at all, or that causation is a principle that holds of objects; all events are loose and separate. The only connection which we have a right to assert is that of an idea with an impression or with the ideas — the subjective routine which is called “association of ideas”. Hume’s constructive theory of causation is an explanation of how we come to suppose that there is causal connection in the world, although there is really nothing more than customary association in our minds.37

If we admit Hume’s fundamental assumption about impressions and ideas, it is impossible to deny the general validity of this reasoning. Any ascertain of a causal connection — the whole structure of natural science therefore — is simply a misinterpretation of certain mental processes. At the outset Hume himself had spoken of impressions as arising from “unknown causes”; and some expressions of the sort were necessary to give his theory a start and to carry the reader along with him; but they are really empty words. Experience is confined to impressions and ideas; causation is an attitude towards them produced by custom — by the mode of sequence of our perceptions; its applicability is only within the range of impressions or ideas; to talk of an impression as caused by something that is neither impression nor idea may have a very real meaning for any philosopher except Hume; but for Hume it cannot have any meaning at all.38

The discussion of causation brings out another and still more general doctrine held by Hume his theory of belief. Hume said, “All belief of matter
of fact or real existence is derived merely from some object, present to the
memory or senses, and a customary conjunction between that and some other
object.” 39 Having found in many instances that any two kinds of objects—
flame and heat, snow and cold—have always been conjoined together, if flame
or snow is presented anew to the senses, the mind is immediately carried by
custom to expect heat or cold, and to ‘believe’ that such a quality does exist
which will be disclosed upon the nearer approach of the objects of experience.
The customary habit is the expectation of seeing the effect on the presentation
of the cause; belief is the feeling or sentiment that accompanies all such
expectations. Nevertheless there lies a fundamental difference between fiction
and belief, both being the operations of imagination evoked by memory and
senses.

Thus the idea of causation, according to hume, has two elements. First,
there is the human nature in the form of imagination and its principle of
association. Secondly, the past experience of constant conjunction. The latter
determines a certain sequence of ideas. Even sometimes one instance may
associate one as the cause of the other. But this is, due to the allied habit of
reading causality into the objects.40

This reduction of causality to connection conjured up by imagination as a
convenient device for dealing with things, takes away the last hope of scient-
ific knowledge. If there is no causality, then there is no real connection
between things. Naturally Hume’s inquiry ends in the denial of knowledge.
Hume is said to be consistent empiricist but we can make here two important
observations. First, Hume nowhere tells us how the successive ideas can be
co-existent or even contiguous. Besides, if we have no guarantee to believe
that things of the future will be like the things of the past, then we cannot
believe in the mental habit as well. If fire and heat cannot be connected but are only conjoined then how can we say that the mental habit will always be the same for all men? Mental habit itself becomes a causal principle, — a universal law to explain causality.\footnote{41}

Hume appears to be describing causal relationship, and, in this description psychology and philosophical analysis are interwoven. This is clear from the fact that Hume gives two definitions of cause on the same page 170 of his Treatise.\footnote{42}

(a) We may define a cause to be ‘An object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are placed in like relations of precedency and contiguity to those objects that resemble the latter.’

(b) ‘A cause is an object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it that the idea of the one determines the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other’.

The definition of cause given in (a) is based on philosophical analysis, and, in (b) it is based on psychological analysis. According to the philosophical analysis causal relation is found in two events or objects, when they are contiguous, successive and in constant conjunction. But constant conjunction is not enough to account for the necessity in causality. Constant conjunction must also at the same time create a mental habit expectation. If A and B be causally related, then the necessary and sufficient condition of A becoming the cause of B are

1. A be precedent and contiguous to B
2. Events resembling B be precedent and contiguous to events resembling B
3. Due to constant conjunction, the idea of A be associated with the events or idea of B
4. A mental habit of expectation be produced in the mind so that the idea of A be followed by the idea of B.

Thus for Hume, the psychological analysis of causation in terms of imagination (being the product of resemblance, contiguity and custom, i.e., causal relation based on association inference) is relevant for philosophical analysis, though not a justification of causal relationship. In other words for Hume genetic consideration is relevant for epistemological analysis of causation.43

It has often been pointed out, and hardly needs repeating, that, according to A.J.Ayer, these definitions are far from being adequate, as they stand. Apart from the infelicity, which we have already noted, of speaking of ‘objects’ as the term of causal relations, and the unwarranted exclusion of action at a distance, they suffer from their failure to take account of the part played by theories in the derivation of what we take to be causal laws. It is doubtful, also, whether the conjunction need be entirely constant. We often make particular causal judgements, with no stronger general backing than a statement of tendency. Hume, indeed, makes some provision for cases of this sort when he speaks of ‘the probability of causes’. He assumes, not altogether in accord with common usage, that a cause has to be a sufficient condition, and also unduly takes it for granted that there is never more than one sufficient condition for any given matter of fact. This would make a cause also a necessary condition, which is, indeed, what Hume describes it as being in the gloss to the first of his definitions in the Enquiry. He allows, however, for what he calls the contrariety of causes, which means that the presence of some other factor, or factors, prevents a given type of ‘object’ from being followed by its usual attendant. If we knew what these other factors were and they operated we could make their absence part of our sufficient condition and regulate our
expectations accordingly. As it is, we have often to be content with generalising from past frequencies. This account of our procedure is not objectionable in itself, so long as we admit the assumption of there not being a plurality of sufficient conditions. What it overlooks is the caveats which we impose on statistical inferences, and once more the extent to which statistical laws are derived from theories.44

Conversely, not every constant conjunction is seen as warranting an ascription of causality. In cases where the examples are not numerous, or occur in what are thought to be exceptional circumstances, or do not fit in with our general picture of the way things happen, the conjunction may be deemed accidental, even though it has occurred without exception. This goes with the serious objection that Hume’s use of words like ‘similar’ and ‘resembling’ in his definitions is too vague. Any two objects may be similar in some respect or other. We need to be told in some detail what kind or degree of similarity is required for the matters of fact which it groups to become suitable candidates for factual inference.55

The charge of circularity is sometimes brought against the second of Hume’s definitions in the Treatise, on the ground that he speaks of an object as ‘determining’ the mind to form the idea of another. This charge is unjustified. It is clear from the whole course of Hume’s argument that no more is claimed here than that the mind in fact acquires the habit of associating the ideas in question. There is no implication that it is ‘forced’ to do so. On the other hand, it was a venial mistake on Hume’s part to include a reference to the mind’s propensity in what was supposed to be a definition of causality. In propounding causal judgements, we express our mental habits, but do not normally assert that we have them. An account of our mental habit does enter into the explanation of our ascriptions of causality: but this is not to say that when we
attribute causal properties to some physical object, we are also making an assertion about ourselves.\textsuperscript{46}

Enough has been said to show that Hume's definitions are formally defective. The fact remains that they do bring out two points, the importance of which outweighs their defects. The first is that it is only the existence of the appropriate regularity in nature that can make a causal proposition true: and the second is that the difference between accidental and causal generalisations is not a difference in the ways they are satisfied, but a difference in our respective attitudes towards them. In the second class of cases we are willing to project accredited regularities on to imaginary or unknown instances; in the first we are not. Though he points the way to this distinction, Hume does not himself enquire into the principles which underlie it.\textsuperscript{47}

With physical sciences involving causality giving only a probable conclusion, with the external world and the self dismissed, with ethical and religious values no longer considered eternal varieties, Hume has swept clean the whole mansion of rationalistic philosophy. Has he then turned into and utter sceptic? Is Hume roundly to be called a sceptic?\textsuperscript{48} Hume analysed the furniture of the mind in terms of fleeting impressions. Anything called knowledge not derived from impressions, according to him, could not be based on reason. Taking impression as his touchstone he called in question the validity of the concepts of substance, causality etc., which make up knowledge proper. He after a careful analysis of the main categories of thought came to the conclusion that there is no substance, neither matter nor self. We are left with passing impressions only. Is there any necessary connection between the impressions so that we could pass with certainty from the one to the other? His most careful search into causation showed that there could be no necessary connection between the impressions. Nothing remains, — the vast structure of
philosophy crumbles to dust. In Hume philosophy finds itself in the midst of ruins of its own making. Yes, the result of Humean inquiry appears to us sceptical. Yet lived in an age in which men entertained the highest hope in the possibility of knowledge. Paradoxical it may sound but it is quite true that Hume's too much faith in the science of psychology, the science of his own making, was the main cause of his scepticism.49

However, it may be held that Hume could not be regarded as a sceptic for he allowed the possibility of mathematical knowledge. Hume rejected the demonstrations of geometry because they are based on the absurd principle of infinite divisibility of extension. But the algebraic and arithmetical demonstration, according to him, maintains 'a perfect exactness and certainty'. Unfortunately he does not tell us, 'how are these ideas of algebra and arithmetic derived'? For an inquiry into them might have revealed that they too, like other ideas, are not derived from any impressions. Any way he maintains that he rules of the demonstrative sciences are 'certain and infallible' but due to our frail faculties our application of them is notoriously fallible. So even here knowledge is only probable. Therefore "having thus found in every probability, beside the original uncertainty inherent in the subject, a new uncertainty derived from the weakness of that faculty, which judges, and having adjusted these two together, we are obliged by our reason to add a new doubt derived from the possibility of error in the estimation we make of the truth and fidelity of our faculties". This quotation shows Hume was a total sceptic. But the total scepticism is self contradictory. The doubting of everything leads also to the doubt of that theory which doubts everything, i.e., scepticism itself becomes doubtful. Hume himself was aware of this and point out, "whoever has taken the pains to refute the cavils of this scepticism, has really, disputed without an antagonist." A few lines earlier he writes, "should it here be asked......
whether I be really one of those sceptics, who holds that all is uncertain, and that our judgement is not in any thing possessed of any measures of truth and falsehood; I should reply, that this question is entirely superfluous, and that neither I, nor any other person was ever sincerely and constantly of that opinion.\textsuperscript{50}

In the light of the last quotation we have to modify our judgement about Hume. No doubt he was, to certain extent, sceptic and as such he became a potent force in the history of thought. But in recent years, the careful analysis of the writings of Hume by Laing, Laird, Kemp Smith and Church shows that he was a \textit{moderate sceptic} and not a total sceptic. Besides, his scepticism, as is popularly held, is not the logical outcome of empiricism. It is not empiricism, but reason which fails to dispel the dark clouds of scepticism.\textsuperscript{51}

Hume was moderate in his scepticism for he maintained that reason apart from imagination cannot solve our doubts but then these could be, he hoped and partly advanced, a system of thought based on our natural propensities. It is the Cartesian abstract reason which falls into doubts and difficulties but a sound basis of valid philosophy can be raised on the \textit{established habits of the mind}. He had a positive philosophy too about which he writes, \textit{"we might hope to establish a system or of opinions, which, if not true (for that, perhaps, is too much to be hoped for), might at least be satisfactory to the human mind, and might stand the test of the critical examination."} His display of the sceptical arguments purports to show that truth lies in the custom or habit of imagination and not in reason. True thinking, according to him, is really sensitive and not cogitative in nature, \textit{"Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determined us to judge as well as to breathe and feel."} Again, he writes, \textit{"Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and curse me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium....... I dine, I play a game of back-}
gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hours' amusement, I return to these speculations, they appear so cold and strained, and ridiculous that I cannot find in my heart to enter in them any father.' Thus we are constrained to maintain that Hume was not a total sceptic but then he used scepticism as a powerful weapon of attack against rationalism. The sceptical arguments are by no means his original property. They derive their source from the Greek scepticism. Empiricism based on naturalistic psychology is not the cause of scepticism but really according to him, is a way of escape out of the difficulties in which reason falls. Thus Hume had a constructive empirical philosophy but due to the following reasons he has been interpreted as a sceptic.\(^52\)

1. First, Hume makes a full display of the sceptical arguments. Thus critical and negative element is so widespread throughout the discussion that one gets the impression that he is merely negative and destructive.

2. Hume makes scepticism the background of his own philosophy. It provides him with a convenient weapon of attack against rationalism and dogmatism.

3. From the rationalistic point of view (which prevailed for a long time in the universities) his philosophy is really sceptical for he maintains that reason is not capable of making our knowledge intelligible. He gives us almost a counsel of despair,‘‘Carelessness and inattention alone can afford us any remedy.’’ He maintains that reason is really sensitive and no rationalist can ever accept this thesis.

4. Lastly, his own constructive philosophy is weak and powerless to deal adequately with the doubts which he himself had raised.

Yes, there are valid grounds for treating Hume as a sceptic. But really he is
not one. He had a constructive philosophy of empiricism with these four principles. (I) The doctrine of impressions and ideas, (II) The laws of association, (III) The imagination and (IV) His theory of relations. By these principles he wants to show that real knowledge is habitual and not cogitative. This means that he tried to explain and resolve many issues psychologically.

First, the impressions must be admitted even by the sceptics and so Hume regards them to be basic touchstone of knowledge. Further, what logic cannot explain, psychology does. With the help of the law of association he shows that in causation there is no logical but psychological necessity, power and substance are not to be discovered in objects but are really in subjects. The law of association explains the mental world, according to him, as the law of Gravitation explains the phenomena of the physical world.53

Similarly, Hume takes the help of imagination in constructing knowledge. No rational ground can be given to explain the connectedness of impressions in knowledge. The real ground lies in the power of imagination to fill up a gap.54

Thus Hume’s philosophy is sceptical with regard to dogmatism and rationalism. Of course, the reply which he supplied to sceptical doubts was unsatisfactory but then it shows that he could not remain in scepticism. Really he hoped to encourage philosophers to think better and never wanted to induce them to remain in despair. Apart from the constructive empirical philosophy he accepted the validity of mathematics and the experimental truths concerning matters of fact. In view of his limitation of knowledge to that which is capable of exact measurement and to that which is present in experience, coupled with his rejection of the suprasensible entities like God or soul, may justly entitle him to be called a positivist rather than a sceptic. Again, in view of his
arguments against the capacity of reason to solve our problems, he may be justly styled a pragmatist, an anti-intellectual rather than a sceptic.\textsuperscript{55}

Thus, Hume had two aspects, one of philosophical empiricism and another of psychologism. His philosophical empiricism could provide no rational basis for the indubitable knowledge of substance, God, external world and soul. Even causality for Hume can have no rational basis for passing from the given to the future events. But for Hume, man is much more than reason. He has to live, grow and gain stability in life. On the level of philosophy, Hume has advised us to accept probabilities. For living naturally, one has to accept habit, custom and social culture. This is exactly what Pyrrhonism stands for. For natural guidance in one’s life.\textsuperscript{56}

1. One has to accept sense-impressions.

2. One as to give oneself to one’s appetites hunger, thirst and other such biological drives.

3. One has to be guided by one’s tradition of custom and laws.

4. One has to give oneself to the life of culture of one’s age.

If we emphasize Hume’s views with regard to his philosophical empiricism, then Hume’s acceptance of impression as the indubitable touchstone of knowledge, coupled with his denial of permanent substance, self and God, then we would place him among the positivists. If, however, we emphasize his doctrine of naturalism, imagination based on associative inference, then Hume would be regarded as a pragmatist. In the history of philosophy, Hume has become famous for the his positivism with its negative conclusion and that is how he is viewed even now.\textsuperscript{57}

The main philosophical work of Hume, the \textit{Treatise}, is a young man’s work. Like Berkeley, Hume’s thoughts also ripened when he was still a youth
and there certainly is a point in Lytton Strachey’s statement that had Hume
died at the age of twenty-six, his real work in the world would have been done
and his fame irrevocably established. Hume had, as if, some revelation which
prompted him to write the Treatise. He thought he had found a solution to
great riddles and was eager to share that knowledge with the world. Though
the Treatise ‘fell dead-born from the press’ and he was disappointed, he did not
give up writing, for literary fame was a ruling passion of his life. His writings,
however, had won him enough notoriety as an atheist and sceptic so that none
would dare publish his work on religion and thus it was published posthumously.
Ironically, he was known as St. David in Edinburgh. The ruthlessness
with which he used the psychological method reveals his bold philosophical
spirit. Hume perhaps thought that what he learnt through a first-hand knowl-
edge of human nature would be useful to verify the truth of the rationalistic
systems which built ‘a priori’. On his own showing, the psychological method
leads to the conclusion that self is non-existent and he accepts it without a fuss.
Berkeley had already shocked the world by denying the material substance.
Without letting people recover from the shock, Hume declared that even the
self does not exist. If the world bears with Berkeley, it must bear with Hume.
Further, if pure empirical observation couples us to accept that even causation
is untrue, Hume has no hesitation to assent to that too. He doggedly follows
the method wherever it leads him. He conveniently overlooks the fact that his
psychological method always uses the crutches of rational analysis. His fantasistics
conclusions were laid at the door of his faulty psychology by later English
philosophy but Kant laid them at the door of psychological method as such
which was bound to be inadequate and argued that philosophy needs some
other method. Both, however, disapproved of Hume’s dogmatism. A writer
with an acute insight, Hume left a deep impress on subsequent philosophy
both in the development of epistemology and morality. Though moderate, his scepticism proved to be powerful enough to rouse Kant from his dogmatic slumber. It remains true that the Critique of Pure Reason had to take into account and grapple with the questions raised by Hume. Hume had badly shaken the trust in eternal values both in metaphysics as well as in ethics and religion. Either his conclusions must be accepted or reason must be reinstated.