CHAPTER – I

THE NATURE OF SCEPTICISM:
THE TRANSITION FROM PYRRHO TO HUME.
Scepticism has a long history from the Greek times to Hume and after. It has remained a permanent philosophical standpoint with varying degrees of intensity and radicalness. While Pyrrho, the Greek sceptic, is the most radical of the sceptics, Hume is a moderate sceptic with tolerance for the non-sceptic point of view. In between we have sceptics of various kinds who have carried on the sceptics' debate across the centuries.

Since my aim is to prove that scepticism must be false if human knowledge is possible, I begin with a historical survey of the development of scepticism from the Greek times to Hume. The aim in this chapter is therefore to present the multifaceted argument of the sceptics in the historical perspective.

1. THE GREEK SCEPTICISM.

Translation of the works of Sextus Empiricus concerning Greek Scepticism in the beginning of the 16th century activated the Continental philosophers later the British philosophers. Scepticism did one great service to philosophy, it led to the introduction of modern age of philosophy on the Continent, later Britain too got liberated from the medieval thinking. Scepticism was a direct enemy of dogmatism. Many scholars consider Plato as the first sceptic and Aristotle as the first dogmatist. The view has got currency through the influence of Arcesilaus and Carneades who were the directors of Plato's Academy during the Hellenistic age. However, the credit is given to Pyrrho of Elis for giving birth to Scepticism. It became matured by the time it reached the age of Sextus Empiricus. Therefore this chapter is devoted to Greek Scepticism, Descartes and Hume. Since Scepticism as a school occurred only in Greece, a synoptic glance on the Greek sceptics has been made, beginning from Pyrrho and ending with Sextus Empiricus. Though not a sceptic, Descartes uses Scepticism to defeat Scepticism. After
its death in Greece, Scepticism revived after several centuries in the Continent. Descartes has been taken as the representative of the Continental reaction to Scepticism. Though John Locke and Berkeley reacted in their own fashion to Scepticism, they were not so vocal as Hume. Hume considered himself as a constructive skeptic. He represented the British thinking on Scepticism. This chapter is restricted to Hume, Descartes and the Greek Sceptics. A study on the limits of Scepticism presupposes a study of Scepticism in depth.

Pyrrho is considered as the founder of the Greek school of Scepticism. As a matter of fact Scepticism that took its birth in the Continent in modern times had its roots in Greek Scepticism. Rather the 16th and 17th century philosophers namely, Montaigne, Gassendi and Marsenne started interpreting the thoughts of the Greek Sceptic Sextus Empiricus. Neither Descartes nor David Hume were ignorant of Greek Scepticism. There are references to Pyrrho in the writings of Hume. Hume clearly mentions the name of Pyrrho and Pyrrhonism, and it is well known that Descartes started as a reaction to Pyrrhonian thinking. So Pyrrho can be described as the father of Western Scepticism and not only the father of Greek Scepticism. A reputed scholar of Greek Philosophy of the Hellenistic age remarks, “that the name that the school bears, Skeptic, goes back to Pyrrho himself. The philosopher must consider and examine (skeptesthai) all opinions and recognize that all affirmations have the same validity.”¹ So Pyrrho becomes the father of Scepticism in its real sense. This scholar further remarks concerning the impact of Pyrrho on western philosophy, “it is this so-called Pyrrhonian Skepticism that we find systematized in the writings of Sextus Empiricus and that had a notable influence - not in the Middle Ages when the works of Sextus were barely known, but from the sixteenth century onward. Many thinkers like Montaigne, Bayle, and Hume adopted a skeptical position and others like Gianfrancesco Pico, Descartes above all, and even Kant used skeptic arguments to demolish certain philosophical doctrines.”²
This does not mean that Greek Philosophers prior to Pyrrho were devoid of sceptical attitude. Of course their Scepticism was partial. Heraclitus was sceptical about the nature of things surrounding us. He thought that contrary to our perception the universe is in constant motion and change. But Heraclitus did not mean that the real nature of the things couldn’t be known. What he meant is simply that the reality is devoid of permanence. He succeeded in making the distinction between appearance and reality. It is only the appearance that presents permanence to our senses, because of appearance our senses are deceived into thinking that the real nature of the universe is also characterized by permanence. But Parmenides presents a wholly opposite view. For him the reality is characterized by permanence. Change and motion are deceptions introduced by our sense perception. What information the sense perception gives to Heraclitus is wholly different from the information given to Parmenides. So they had contradictory views about reality. If Heraclitus is right then Parmenides is wrong. Pyrrho was well aware of the controversies going on in Greek philosophy of his time.

If one accepts Pyrrho’s thought then one cannot say either that reality is permanent (Parmenides) or that is in flux (Heraclitus). Pyrrho was a legendary figure. Like Socrates and Buddha he never wrote any thing. He only talked. So also like Socrates and Buddha Pyrrho’s talk also survived. He too had faithful disciples, among whom Timon was well known. The position of Timon was like that of Plato. Plato was responsible for propagating the thoughts of Socrates. Similarly Timon propagated the thoughts of Pyrrho. Hellenistic philosophy owes more to Pyrrho than to any other philosopher of that time. He was a kind of Socrates of the Hellenistic world. According to A.A. Long, “for the Hellenistic Philosophers Pyrrho occupies a position that is comparable, in many respects to that of Socrates in relation to the philosophy of the fourth century BC.”
Pyrrho was born at Elis about 365 BC. He was a student of Anaxarchus. Anaxarchus was the court philosopher of Alexander the Great. That is how both Pyrrho and Anaxarchus got a chance to reach India with Alexander. It is said about Anaxarchus that he was influenced by the naked philosophers of India. Anaxarchus considered physical world as illusory. According to Sextus Empiricus, “A good many people ... have said that Metrodours. Anaxarchus and Monimus abolished the criterion (of truth) - Metrodours because he said ‘we know nothing, nor do we even know just this, that we know nothing’; and Anaxarchus and Monimus, because they compared existing things to stage- painting and took them to be like experiences that occur in sleep or insanity.”\(^4\) It is very common in India to call the physical world illusory. But this view was very uncommon in the Greek thought. It is doubtful that any philosopher prior to Anaxarchus held that the world is like a stage painting. This view itself is sufficient evidence that Anaxarchus was influenced by the naked philosophers of India, who were described as Gymnosophists by the Greeks. Anaxarchus certainly influenced Pyrrho’s thought. So also Pyrrho was influenced by Gymnosophists of India. According to Diogenes Laertius, Pyrrho “would maintain that nothing is honorable or base, or just or unjust, and that likewise in all cases nothing exists in truth; and that convention and habit are the basis of everything that men do; for each thing is no more this than this.”\(^5\) Pyrrho’s reference to convention and habit as the guide of our actions sounds like David Hume. This is an attack on Jurisprudence, ethics, ontology and epistemology etc. Aristotle also points out, “According to Timon, Pyrrho declared that things are indifferent, unmeasurable and inarbitrable. For this reason neither our sensations nor our opinions tell us truths or falsehoods.”\(^6\) Pyrrho is blaming not so much the limitation of our psyche as the nature of objects supposed to occupy the reality. The objects happen to be so constituted that the human mind is unable to grasp them. Since opinions are formed on the basis of sensations, so if the sensations are rejected opinion will also be rejected. Pyrrho rejected the assertions of Dogmatists who claimed to possess knowledge. He taught that every object of human knowledge involves uncertainty. He argued that it is
impossible ever to arrive at the knowledge of truth. According to Arne Naess, "Pyrrho's Scepticism is .... superior to any other variant in its consistency, its radicalness, and also in its practical importance for intellectually gifted persons with high ideals of sincerity and honesty." If a sceptic is consistent he cannot avoid radical conclusion. So if one sacrifices radicalism one would have to sacrifice consistency. "Philosophical scepticism covers all fields of articulated cognition or discursive thinking. Pyrrhonism belongs to that kind." He spent a great part of his life in solitude, and was undisturbed by fear, or joy or grief. Pyrrho sees Scepticism as the road to perfect mental peace and the escape from the calamities of life.

Pyrrho said that the proper course of the sage is to ask himself three questions. Firstly, we must ask what things are and how they are constituted. Secondly, we ask how we are related to these things. Thirdly, we ask what ought to be our attitude towards them. As to what things are we can only answer that we know nothing. We only know how the things appear to us, but of their inner substance we are ignorant. If the real nature of things cannot be known either to senses or reason, then there is nothing by reference to which the truth or falsehood can be tested. Pyrrho is attacking all theories of knowledge, which seek to show that certain perceptual experience provides accurate information about the real nature of objects. We cannot get objects independent of sense-perception, and sense-perception provides no guarantee that we apprehend things as they really are. Objects in themselves are not available to test our sense-perception. Sense-perception reveals what appears to the perciptient, but what appears cannot be used as sound evidence from which to infer 'what is'. Pyrrho is making a distinction like Kant between Phenomenon and Noumenon. Things as they are in themselves cannot be known. It is only the appearances of things with which we are acquainted. A.A. Long says, "Pyrrho is arguing that our perceptual experience can never be sufficient to warrant indubitable statements or beliefs about the external world. He does not deny that something, say, yellow sweet and sticky appears to me and he
will admit that I may be justified in saying, ‘This looks like honey’. But he holds that my sense perception is quite compatible with the proposition ‘this is not honey’ as well as the proposition ‘this does not look like honey to Pyrrho’.”

Here Pyrrho is showing the difference between the object as perceived or appears and the same object independent of its being perceived. Pyrrho says that it is possible to have contradictory statements on each and every thing. Arne Naess points out while interpreting Sextus Empiricus that the sceptic “finds that to any pro-argument for a doctrine or proposition there can be found an at least equally strong contra argument..... he finds no better grounds for accepting the arguments in favour of the doctrine than for accepting those against.”

For Pyrrho both pro arguments and contrary arguments are equally strong and balanced, which leads him to detach himself from all judgements. So he suggested to suspend judgements. He suspended judgements on moral concepts also. For Pyrrho suspension of judgements leads to freedom from confusion. According to Naess “... he (Pyrrho) eventually finds that epoche leads to, or is accompanied by, just that peace of mind (ataraxia) which he set out to achieve by finding truth.”

Nothing is true or false. It only appears so. In the same way nothing is good or evil. Only it appears so. These appearances are sufficient guide for our actions, be they moral or non-moral.

It might have became clear that Pyrrho’s Scepticism was not something that was restricted to the theoretical level, he uses his Scepticism for reaching a given form of life that can be characterized as the life without attachment of any kind. Most of us, if not all of us, prefer to live an active life. But Pyrrho’s preference was quite unlike us. He lived a kind of life, which exhibited the detachment from the world. Detachment from the world presupposes the abolition of desires. According to Timon, “Desire is absolutely the first of all bad things.” Pyrrho’s Scepticism was not the result of arm-chair thinking. It was the result of a deep study of life. While moving with Alexander’s
array Pyrrho had first hand experience with human suffering. In such a situation indifference to the world would be a natural outcome. As Emil Brehier points out, "Pyrrho must certainly have had direct contact with Hinduism since while accompanying Alexander on his Voyages, he met the Hindu ascetics whom the Greeks called Gymnosophists and must have been struck by their insensitivity and indifference even to torture."  

After Timon's death in 230 BC there remained no direct disciples of Pyrrho to continue his tradition. Though Pyrrho died, Scepticism survived. It became the property of Plato's Academy. For nearly 200 years Scepticism was the property of Plato's Academy, of which the first sceptic director was Arcesilaus, who was supposed to be the head of the Second or Middle Academy. He was born in 315 BC. Like Pyrrho he also taught the suspension of judgements by providing arguments for two contrary positions. He revived the dialectical tradition of Plato, for which Diodorus became well known. Arcesilaus was rightly described by a contemporary of his time. "He was "Plato in front, and Pyrrho in the back and Diodorus in the middle," thus asserting that Arcesilaus was only in appearance Platonic, but Pyrrhonian in reality." One can hardly deny Pyrrhonian influence on Arcesilaus. According to Kristeller, "Arcesilaus affirms that we must suspend our assertions about everything. Every perception and every assertion (logos) is uncertain. The arguments in favor of contrary assertions are of equal force, and all things are incomprehensible (akatalepta)." Arcesilaus introduced the term incomprehensibility. It was opposite of comprehensibility. Stoics maintain the distinction between comprehensive perception and incomprehensive perception. Comprehensive perceptions are free from uncertainty. This lead Arcesilaus to reject comprehensive perception altogether. If all perceptions are incomprehensible then all of them are uncertain. Arcesilaus was deadly against to the Stoics.

According to Sextus Empiricus, there was one aspect in which Arcesilaus was
different from Pyrrho. "For Arcesilaus suspension of judgement was an "end in itself". Whereas for Pyrrho this suspension carries with it the tranquility of the soul (ataraxia)." There was another aspect in which Arcesilaus differed from Pyrrho. Pyrrho considered dialectic as an unnecessary exercise. But Arcesilaus was a dialectician, and used dialectics in support of his Scepticism.

Arcesilaus, in order to justify his headship of Plato's Academy, proposed a sceptic interpretation of Plato. The Sceptic direction, which Arcesilaus gave to Plato's Academy, lasted for almost two centuries. Referring to Arcesilaus, Diogenes Laertius points out that, "he (Arcesilaus) was the originator of the Middle Academy, being the first to suspend his assertions owing to the contrarieties of arguments. He was also the first to argue pro and contra, and the first to change traditional Platonic discourse and, by question and answer, to make it more of a debating contest." The old Academy lost its original character, it was full of dogmatics who had no interest in dialectic. So there is a sense in which Arcesilaus gave a new life to Academy.

The second important academic sceptic was Carneades. His period is supposed to be 213-128 BC. He became the head of the Third Academy. The second Academy was headed by Arcesilaus. The contribution of Carneades to Greek philosophy was immense. He carried Greek philosophy to Rome. In 156 BC Carneades went to Rome as a part of an Athenian Embassy. It is said that Carneades in Rome made a profound impression on his listeners. In Rome Carneades presented himself as a real sceptic, devoting his first lecture in favour of Justice and second against Justice. As A. A. Long quotes "when Carneades had been sent by the Athenians as an ambassador to Rome, he discoursed at length on justice in the hearing of Galba and Cato the censor, the greatest orators of the time. On the next day he overturned his own discourse with a speech putting the opposite position, and undermined justice which he had praised on the previous day." Carneades had to show to Galba and Cato his own rhetorical exercise,
therefore, the second lecture was essential. Secondly, Carneades wished to show that he is opponent of his own views. That all views for him have hardly any value, speaking against Justice is as good or, as bad, as speaking in favor of Justice. Carneades gave a practical demonstration the he was a sceptic.

Carneades attacked the stoic’s criterion of truth. Kristeller points out, “There is no criterion of truth, neither the intellect (logos) nor perception, nor Phantasy, nor any other thing, because all these things deceive us."30 It is not only the empirical reality and judgements concerning reality that are doubted by Carneades, he also doubted “certainty of Axioms in mathematics.”21

The major contribution of Carneades is the concept of probability. His position is called probabilism, which is an intermediate position between radical Scepticism and dogmatism. The other dimension of his probabilism is that ‘Carneades was perhaps the first to introduce into logical and philosophical discourse the concept of the probable (pithanon) which stands in the middle between the certain and the dubious. The New Academy was therefore characterized by probabilism.”22 Those who are working on probability will understand the importance of Carneades for bringing the attention of intellectuals to this concept. Once certainty is rejected probability remains the only concept to be given a serious thought. One may find echo of Carneades’ thought in Hume. He too rejected certainty, and had to fall back on probability.

Carneades finds that the concept incomprehensive introduced by Arcesilaus does not show that the incomprehensive perception must be uncertain. It is only by saying that perception is probable, it is ruled out that it is certain. According to Sextus Empiricus, “Despite the fact that everything is uncertain, for Carneades the probable is sufficient for judging and action in daily life."23 Concerning both Carneades and Arcesilaus a commentator writes “So great was Carneades’ stature and authority that
after his death it was his philosophy more directly than that of Socrates and Plato that Academics felt required to interpret and defend (this is perhaps why some sources treat his headship as the inauguration of the ‘New Academy’ with the school under Arcesilaus forming the ‘Middle Academy’ i.e. transitional phase).”

Academic Scepticism came to an end with Philo of Larissa. He was the head of the Academy from 109 BC. Sextus Empiricus described him as the founder of the Fourth Academy. The fact that he is described as the founder of the Fourth Academy shows that he might have made some significant contribution to philosophy in general, if not to Scepticism. It is through the writings of Cicero that Philo is known. For some years he was one of the principle teachers of Cicero. However, commitment to Scepticism which we find in Arcesilaus and Carneades is missing in Philo. If his impact has been as great as that of Arcesilaus and Carneades, the Academy would not have gone back to its old style. Though the director of the New Academy, he was knocking at the gates of the old Academy.

Sometimes in the middle of the first century BC Aenesidemus started the Pyrrhonist movement, revolting against the New Academy headed by Philo of Larissa. He was based in Alexandria, not in Athens. Sceptics for Aeneidemus meant searchers. The Academic sceptics from the time of Arcesilaus to the time of Philo were not Pyrrhonists. Pyrrho rejected dialectics, but the Academic sceptics made use of it. Only Pyrrho’s actual personality was recognised by the Academic sceptics. For 200 years Pyrrhonist philosophy was extinct, Aenesidemus revived it. His work Pyrrhonist Discourses survived. The aim of the book is to establish “that there is no firm basis for cognition, either through sense-perception, or indeed in thought.” Both the phases, the earlier phase of Pyrrho and Timon and the later phase beginning with Aenesidemus, have been well presented by Sextus Empiricus. Of course Sextus Empiricus also exemplified the views of Academic sceptics. Aenesidemus has attacked not only the
non-sceptical systems but also the Academic sceptics, particularly Philo, who drifted towards the old Academy.

It is said that Aenesidemus made a pioneering contribution to the sceptical methodology. This was done with the detailed discussion of 'ten modes' (tropes). They are nothing but ten ways of achieving the Pyrrhonist suspension of judgements. One may be surprised to know from Sextus that Scepticism for Aenesidemus was a road which leads to Heraclitianism. The surprise is because Aenesidemus was extremely devoted to Pyrrho, and for Pyrrho the aim was ataraxia. Whether Pyrrho accepted the doctrine of flux is questionable because he accepted no doctrine, be it the doctrine of flux or the doctrine of permanence. Then why did Aenesidemus refer to Heraclitus? According to A.A. Long and Sedely "...this may be adequately explained as a specifically anti-Stoic campaign on Aenesidemus' part. Heraclitus was regarded by the stoics as an important fore runner, and it has been plausibly suggested that Aenesidemus was trying to embarrass them by developing the un-Stoic aspects of Heraclitus' thought." With Aenesidemus the center of Scepticism shifted from Athens to Alexandria, with Cicero it further shifted to Rome. Cicero used Latin in his writings so he was making Greek Philosophy popular among the Romans. Prior to Cicero, Epicureans had their entry into Rome. Pleasure-loving people of Rome welcomed Epicureanism. Cicero, being the student of Philo of Larissa, accepted the moderate Scepticism of the Academy. He rejected both Epicureans and stoics. However, as a jurist he move to stoicism. It is certainly not his Scepticism, it is his stoicism that led him to natural law and natural justice. Credit goes to Cicero for bringing Hellenism to Rome.

Though last but the most important member of the Pyrrhonist group was Sextus Empiricus. It is because of him that the Greek Scepticism, not only Pyrrhonian, survived. His works, the Outlines of Pyrrhonism and Against the Mathematicians, had
been translated in several languages. The history of Scepticism has come to be preserved through Sextus. It is through his work only that we know about the different sceptical movements till the middle of the second century AD, which was supposed to be his period. His works became popular after fifteenth century AD, when they were translated in Latin and French etc. Sextus was originally a medical doctor and not a philosopher. He was not an original thinker or a genius but was a very good scholar. His both the works exhibit his scholarship. His first book *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* is devoted to ten modes (tropes) of Aenesidemus. It is through empirical investigation that Sextus discovered that different animals have different sense impression of the same objects. This is because different animals have difference in their origins, physiological structures and their audio-visual apparatus. The pattern of the argument is illustrated through the first mode as follows.

1. “X appears F to animals of kind K
2. X appears F* to animals of kind K*
3. It is impossible to decide whether the appearance of K or K* have authority
4. So we suspend judgement as to whether X is really F or F*.”

Likewise different modes have been discussed in different ways, but the aim of all the modes is the same i.e. suspension of judgements. These modes are as follows: 1. the mode depending on the disparity between animals; 2. that depending on the differences between men; 3. that depending on the different structures of the sense-organs; 4. That depending on situations; 5. that depending on positions, distances and locations; 6. that depending on admixtures; 7. that depending on the qualities and configurations of the objects; 8. that derived from relativity; 9. that depending on regularity or rarity of meeting; 10. that depending on ways of life, customs, laws, legendary beliefs and doctrinaire opinions.”

Before we close the discussion, some serious objections against Pyrrhonian Scepticism have to be considered. The major objection is in connection with belief and
action. An action is supposed to be the result of accepting a judgement. When one uses an umbrella to save himself from rain, ‘it may seem puzzling why a Pyrrhonist should open his umbrella if he does not even take impression that it is raining to be true.’ It was only because he thought that it is raining that he was led to open his umbrella. His action was the result of accepting the truth of a judgement. Sextus would reply “...that his actions are either instinctive, e.g. drinking when thirsty, or conditioned by customs and educational processes of his own society, and can therefore be performed automatically without the intervention of assent.” Pyrrho accepted custom and habit as the guide for living among appearances. Every action should be prefaced by a belief is the philosophers’ myth which Pyrrho rejected. He lived till the age of 90, years in spite of the facts that he suspended judgements on all matters whatsoever. Similarly, “we can ascribe to Aenesidemus the position that ordinary acts of self-maintenance and self-preservation may be performed automatically, without assent.” All this means that the actions of the Pyrrhonian sceptic cannot be the result of a rational choice, they are like instinctive actions of animals. The superiority of man over animal is dissolved. This is not a desirable consequence to which Greek Scepticism has led us.

2. DESCARTES ON SCEPTICISM

Descartes is undoubtedly the father of modern philosophy. Modern philosophy is characterized by its revolt against Aristotle and the Aristotelian spirit that was hovering throughout the period of medieval philosophy. Opposition to Aristotle was Descartes’ major occupation. His Meditations attempted to introduce foundations of his own physics against that of Aristotle’s. As he remarked, “these six Meditations contain all the foundations of my physics. But please don’t say so, because those who favour Aristotle would perhaps make more difficulty about approving them; and I hope those who read them will accustom themselves insensibly to my principles, and recognize their truth, before noticing that they destroy those of Aristotle.” So Descartes is
supposed to have introduced a new physics that provides a new outlook about the world, in opposition to the Aristotelian physics that provided the outdated outlook of the world. Descartes’ opposition to Aristotle is like Gelileleo’s opposition to Ptolemy.

Scepticism contributed a lot for the Hellenistic transformation of Greek thought. So also Scepticism seems to have played a major role in the construction of the modern thought. *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* by Sextus was translated into Latin by Eestinnie in 1562. Just after 18 years Montaigne published his *Apology for Raimond Sebond* which exhibited the influence of Sextus. In his *Apology* Montaigne has reproduced a lot of material from Sextus. He attempted to show that neither sense or reason can give us any knowledge. The reality with which we are acquainted is always distorted. Consider some remarks of Montaigne from the last part of *Apology*: “since our condition is always adjusting things to self and transforming them according to its own nature, we no longer know what things are in reality; for nothing comes to us but what is falsified and altered by our sense…. seeing the senses cannot settle our dispute, being themselves full of uncertainty, it must be reason that is to do it; but no reason can be established without the support of another reason; so here we are running backwards to infinity.

Both we and our judgement, and all mortal things, are perpetually following and rolling onward. Consequently nothing certain can be established concerning the one by means of the other, both the judging and the judge being in continual motion and mutation.”

Montaigne’s reference to “continual motion and mutation” implies that no proper judgement is possible because what is judged is always slipping away. Though not directly, this is Montaigne’s way of recommending suspension of judgements. Montaigne used Scepticism to reject reason and sense so that one is able to accept Christianity and faith alone.

Montaigne excluded extreme conclusions of Sextus. He attempted to show that
there is no conflict between the Pyrrhonian thought and the Christian doctrine of salvation. Montaigne rejected dogmatism, but he also rejected extreme conclusion to which a Pyrrhonian is committed. Pyrrho has not rejected appearances, he rejected only reality. One should not ask any questions about reality. But one could adjust one's life to appearances. Montaigne was responsible for the spread of Pyrrhonism on the Continent. Pyrrhonism brought into existence on the Continent a new spirit in the early 17th century. Montaigne's Pyrrhonism, according to Popkin, was 'popularized by his disciple Pirre Charron in his De la Sagesse and Les Trois V'erite's, and Jean Pierre Camus in his Essai Sceptique. This view formed a basic part of the intellectual climate of the liberty of the early 17th century in its scepticism of and freedom from traditional doctrines. Montaigne and Charron were among the best read and most admired thinkers. Renaissance Humanism coupled with Pyrrhonism brought out a completely new age - age of spirit - to the Continent. The Continent refused to be suffocated by the fetters of tradition. This study of appearance was further developed by Gassendi. According to him, the Pyrrhonists had no hesitation in accepting appearances. Life would have become impossible if appearances were also rejected. Pyrrho was certainly interested in promotion of life, and not in its annihilation. It is only when one lives that one can attain a state of ataraxia. Gassendi was interested in science. He accepted the atomistic theory about appearances, which involved the existence of unobservable particles. According to Gassendi, science is a body of truths about appearances, not about reality. After Gassendi came in contact with Mersenne, he gave up Pyrrhonism. He became an Epicurean. Perhaps it is under the influence of Epicureanism that he developed the atomic hypothesis.

Mersenne popularized Pyrrhonism in his own fashion. It is in condemning Pyrrhonism that he brought out the details of Pyrrhonism. According to Mersenne, the sceptics are enemies of both God and science. In order to condemn Pyrrhonism, Mersenne gave detailed exposition of the book one and book two of the Outlines of
Pyrrhonism. His hostility popularized Pyrrhonism more than harming it. The challenge of Pyrrhonians was fully understood only by Descartes, perhaps Mersenne was responsible for Descartes’ awareness of the danger of Pyrrhonian thinking.

When Descartes entered into the academic world he discovered that science was given an empiricalistic and probabilistic interpretation. This kind of interpretation led to Scepticism. He wished to give new foundations to science by opposing Scepticism. As Christopher Hookway points out, “Descartes’ principal adversaries were various sceptics and Pyrrhonists: his aim was to provide foundations for science and religion by refuting Scepticism.”

Though Descartes was the father of Modern Philosophy, he was certainly not the father of modern Scepticism. The range of modern Scepticism is limited. It has nothing to do with the practical life. Modern sceptics are quite unlike the Greek sceptics. Scepticism was used by Pyrrho for ethical ends. As we have already seen, scepticism led Pyrrho to the state of suspension of judgements. Suspension of judgements was required to have the mental state of solitude or peace. In Greek terminology it has been described as the state of ataraxia. Cartesian scepticism, as will be shown in this section, was wholly different from Pyrrhonian scepticism. The fundamental difference is that scepticism is not a doctrine to which Descartes was committed. Scepticism is not a doctrine in the sense in which monism or dualism etc. are doctrines. Descartes established dualism of mind and body, and used scepticism for carrying out his project. Hume used his scepticism for denial of the external world. This was done in order to bring out his own form of subjective idealism. So far as their schools are concerned, we can say that Descartes belongs to the school of Rationalism and Hume belongs to the school of Empiricism. Pyrrho is known for Scepticism and practical life, which he led, so is also the case of Timon. We cannot even say that there is any such thing as a school of Scepticism in modern times, as there was a school of Scepticism among the Greeks.
Consider the case of Descartes. In the Cartesian sense, a sceptic is one who doubts. To doubt the truth of a proposition means that one is not certain about its truth. To doubt is to invite the mental state of uncertainty. How to remove this mental state and to arrive at the opposite state, the state of certainty? This was Descartes attempt. As Bernard Williams points out, referring to the Cartesian doubt, "the Meditations use the doubt to lead out of the doubt into knowledge and a correct conception of things...Descartes claimed that he had taken the doubts of scepticism farther than the sceptics had taken them, and had been able to come out the other side."

So scepticism is used as a tool or a method to arrive at certainty. Therefore, Descartes, scepticism is described as methodical Scepticism. Scepticism is not a doctrine but a method. Any method is like an instrument that we use for certain purpose. Once the purpose is served, the tool or instrument is kept aside. Once certainty is obtained, the method of doubt becomes defunct. We need not worry about it. Descartes' position does not coincide even with the position of the Academic sceptic to whom Sextus Empiricus refers. An Academic sceptic remains in the realm of probabilities. He never reaches the state of certainty.

Descartes' position would become clear even from the first sentence of *Meditations*. He picked up 'doubt' as an instrument for obtaining a piece of information that is free from doubt. Consider the opening remarks of the first Meditation. "Some years ago I was struck by the large number of falsehoods that I had accepted as true in my childhood, and by the highly doubtful nature of the whole edifice that I had subsequently based on them. I realized that it was necessary, once in the course of my life, to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations." Descartes clearly scrutinizes the beliefs, which he had in the past, some of these beliefs later become false. So it naturally comes to his mind that there is no guarantee that the
beliefs which he had at present may not become false in future. This leads Descartes to a thought-experiment. He contemplates the possibility of doubting all the beliefs, which he holds, including those, which he has not so far rejected. This leads to the possibility of entertaining universal doubt, doubt that is not restricted only to this or that item. Being a mathematician and a physicist his idea is the discovery of the foundations on which the structure of knowledge may be erected. Descartes expects that his universal doubt would lead to those foundational truths, which he expects to be free from doubt.

So far as the empirical world is concerned, its knowledge depends on our senses, such senses as hearing, seeing, tasting etc. Are senses reliable? Descartes' trouble is that senses cannot give knowledge that is free from uncertainty. Do not senses deceive us? Yes, they certainly do. As Descartes points out in the first page of the First Meditation itself, "...from time to time I have found that the senses deceive, and it is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived us even once." The deception to which Descartes is referring in this context is limited. If we look at a tower from a distance, though it is actually square in shape, it appears as round. Descartes points out that there are situations in which we can get false beliefs. Our perceptual beliefs are conditioned by many factors like proper lighting, the normal power of vision, etc. It is a universal fact that the distant objects appear somewhat smaller in size and shape than their actual size and shape. But this cannot lead us to doubt empirical judgements. Senses seem to deceive us in some circumstances, but seem to gives us knowledge in other circumstances. Therefore, Descartes was in need of an argument which is more general. Dream argument was such a general argument. The better example of deception is dreaming. As Descartes writes, "How often asleep at night, am I convinced of just such familiar events- that I am here in my dressing-gown, sitting by the fire- when in fact I am lying undressed in bed." There is no guarantee that what I am seeing, smelling, touching, hearing etc. is not part of a dream. The senses, which operate when I am awake, are the same, which operate when I am sleeping. I see an
apple on the table. The apple that I see could be a real, physical apple or an apple appearing in my dream. I hear the church bell ringing. This ringing could be a part of my dream. I have tasted mangoes and apples in my dream no less than in my waking state. How can it be shown that I am not dreaming now? There is no marked difference between the waking state and the dreaming state. This situation allows the possibility of doubt concerning empirical reality. This argument casts doubt, not only on physical objects like tables and chairs, but also on my body. In my dream I am eating an apple. If the apple is not physical, how could my mouth be physical, or the process of eating, a physical process? Since the physical objects are doubted, Descartes is led to doubt such science disciplines as physics, astronomy, medicine and other similar disciplines.

Judgements concerning empirical reality are very different in nature from judgements that are arithmetical and geometrical. Certainty associated with geometrical and arithmetical judgements cannot be removed by dream argument. It makes quite good sense to say that I see a chair in the corner of this room, but I may be dreaming. But it makes no sense to say that 2+2=4, but I may be dreaming. To reject mathematical judgements, the dream argument appears to be non-functional. As Descartes points out, "For whether I am awake or asleep, two and three added together are five and a square has no more than four sides. It seems impossible that such transparent truths should incur any suspicion of being false." So Descartes recognizes the impotency of the dream argument for conferring uncertainty on mathematical judgements. In order to cast doubt on arithmetical and geometrical judgements, Descartes first contemplates about the hypothesis of God. God, being omnipotent, could perhaps mislead me about any judgement, be it an empirical or an a priori judgement. But this would imply that God is a deceiver. According to Descartes, "God would not have allowed me to be deceived...since he is said to be supremely good. So God could not be a reason for my doubt about a priori judgements. His goodness does not allow deception. Descartes comes to the conclusion "that not God, who is supremely good and the source of truth,
but rather some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me.” So the demon becomes the grand deceiver. If the demon can mislead me into thinking that 2 and 2 make 4, he may also mislead me into thinking about the physical objects. After the introduction of the demon argument, the dream argument becomes redundant. The demon is sufficient to mislead me into the truth of mathematical judgements as about the truth of empirical judgements. The dream argument is superior, in the sense that most of us, if not all of us, had had dreams, but very few persons, mostly psychotics, have seen Demons. Demon hypothesis is wider, but less authentic. Dream argument is restricted, but quite authentic.

It is interesting to note that some judgements remain true whether I am asleep or awake. ‘Two and three added together are five’ and ‘A square has no more than four sides’, according to Descartes, remain true in both, the waking state and also in the sleeping state. This opens the possibility of having such transparent truths, which remain true in spite of the deception by an all-powerful deceiver. Even Descartes’ demon would fail to deceive me about their truth. The statement ‘I doubt’ is one such truth. For if I doubt that I doubt even then I doubt. Doubting is a form of thinking, like such other forms as believing, asserting, etc. Believing, asserting, etc. are species of the same genus. The genus in question is ‘thinking’. The relation between ‘doubting’ and ‘thinking’ is like the relation between ‘red’ and ‘colour’. Red is a colour. So accepting something is ‘red’ is accepting that it is ‘coloured’. Similarly, if there occurs doubt then there occurs thinking. So Descartes has reached the most indubitable truth, the truth of ‘I think’. This truth has also led him to another truth, the truth of ‘I exist’. If ‘I think then I exist’, because it is contradictory to say ‘I think but I do not exist’. Descartes considers these two truths as clear and distinct.

Referring to the Cartesian ‘cogito ergo sum’ (I think therefore I exist), Hintikka comments, “After hundreds of discussions of Descartes’ famed principle we still do not
seem to have any way expressing his alleged insight in the terms which would be
general and precise enough to enable us to judge its validity or its relevance to the
consequences he claimed to draw from it.\textsuperscript{42} Obviously Descartes’ ‘famed principle’
refers to ‘cogito’. In this situation what is possible on our part is simply to point out the
difficulties to which Descartes has led us. The first question which comes to one’s mind
is whether Descartes considers ‘cogito’ as inference, that is, whether ‘sum’ has been
inferentially derived from ‘Cogito’? The use of ‘ergo’ or the English word ‘therefore’
suggests that ‘I exist’ has been syllogistically derived from ‘I think’. If ‘I exist’ is the
conclusion of the syllogistic inference then there must be a major premise, which is
general. The major promise, which has not been expressed, would be something like
‘everything that thinks exists’. If it is true that ‘everything that thinks exists’ coupled
with the truth that ‘I think’, then it clearly follows that “I exist”. But the difficulty arises
with this kind of reasoning; how has Descartes arrived at the truth of the major premise,
which is general? Descartes does not accept that ‘cagito’ is a syllogism, that ‘I exist’
has been syllogistically derived from ‘I think’. In his writings sometimes Descartes
rejects that ‘I exist’ is derived syllogistically. As Bernard Williams quotes Descartes
against syllogistic derivation of ‘I exist’ from ‘I think’, “when some one says “I think,
therefore I am or I exist”, he does not deduce his existence from his thinking by means
of a syllogism… if he deduced it by means of a syllogism, he would first have had to
know the major premise, “Everything that thinks is or exists.”\textsuperscript{44} But how could one
form general propositions without having the knowledge of particular propositions? The
position to which Descartes leads us is to accept that ‘I exist’ is derived from ‘I think’,
but not in a syllogistic fashion. ‘I think’ therefore I exist’ is a single proposition and not
a combination of two propositions. As Bernard Williams writes “‘I think therefore I
am”, in the misleading form of an inference, expresses in fact a single proposition,
which is the exact point at which doubt is halted.”\textsuperscript{44} Hintikka also maintains the same.
Hintikka writes, “by saying cogito, ergo sum he does not logically (syllogistically)
deduce sum from cogito but rather perceives intuitively (“by a single act of mental
vision") the self-evidence of sum." Descartes' intuition perhaps functions like this. Consider the proposition 'I think but I do not exist'. This proposition is certainly self refuting. If I do not exist how could I think? My existence is a presupposition of my thinking. My thinking in a way becomes possible through my existence. Therefore, Descartes succeeds in deriving 'I exist' from 'I think'. This derivation cannot be called syllogistic, because the major premise is missing. According to Hintikka, "Descartes realised, however dimly, the existential inconsistency of the sentence "I don't exist" and therefore the existential self-verifiability of "I exist". Cogito, ergo sum is only one possible way of expressing this insight." The same thing holds about Cogito. There is inconsistency involved in saying 'I do not think'. Therefore, 'I thinks' becomes true by the very fact of its expression.

Gassendi's argument against 'Cogito' deserves attention. Gassendi finds nothing very remarkable about Descartes' 'Cogito' argument. Why appeal to my thinking for inferring my existence? Why the mental state of thinking? Why not a physical state, a state like the state of walking. Copying the style of 'Cogito', Gassendi points out that my 'existence' can be derived from my 'walking'. One can argue like Descartes 'I walk therefore I exist'. Descartes has argued against Gassendi that a physical state cannot be a substitute for a mental state. My existence is indubitably inferred from my thinking. No such inference is possible with a physical state. The reason is very simple: I can doubt that I am walking because sometimes 'I do not walk', yet I think I walk, as happens in a dream. There is no incoherence involved in saying I doubt that I am walking, for I may be dreaming.

Therefore, there is no indubitability attached to 'I walk'. Then from 'I walk' how can one draw one's existence which may be indubitably true? But if 'I doubt I think' even then 'I think'. Therefore 'I think' is indubitably true, and from this indubitable truth follows another indubitable truth, 'I exist'. Certainly my existence is guaranteed if
it is derived from ‘I think’ rather than derived from ‘I walk’. While replying to Gassendi - type arguments Descartes writes, “I may not, for example, make the inference “I am walking, therefore I exist”, except in so far as the awareness of walking is a thought. The inference is certain only if applied to this awareness, and not to the movement of the body which sometimes – in the case of dreams – is not occurring at all, despite the fact that I seem to myself to be walking. Hence from the fact that I think I am walking I can very well infer the existence of a mind which has this thought, but not the existence of a body that walks and the same applies in other cases.” To some extent at least Descartes has met the Gassendi – type argument.

What sort of certainty is attached to ‘I think’ or ‘I exist’? Their certainty is not logical, that is they are not tautologies. Neither ‘I do not think’ is self-contradictory, nor ‘I do not exist’ is self-contradictory. Therefore, neither of the two propositions ‘I think’ and ‘I exist’ are analytically true. If it is maintained that these propositions are certain, then their certainty is empirical, not logical. However, they are different from other kinds of empirical propositions. These propositions, according to Bernard Williams, “belong to a class of propositions that are true if they are asserted, conceived, etc. and not to the class of propositions that are true no matter what the facts may be.” Descartes considers that these propositions are indubitable. Indubitability does not seem to be a logical concept. Descartes is certainly not ignorant of the fact that all knowledge is not a priori, that much of our knowledge is empirical. And these two propositions ‘I think’ and ‘I exist’ can function as foundations for our empirical knowledge. Of course, this does not mean that Descartes would accept our interpretation of his views. Consider his remarks. He says, “thus each individual can mentally have intuition of the fact that he exists, and that he thinks; that the triangle is bounded by three lines only, the sphere by single superficies, and so on.” Descartes has put “I think” in the same pigeonhole as the proposition that “the triangle is bounded by three lines only”. If it is maintained that these propositions are diverse and belong to different pigeonholes then ‘intuition’
becomes a subjective category. But intuitive truths are not subjective and psychological.

Descartes' 'Cogito' exhibits the failure of the demon argument, that is, the failure of the demon to deceive me. He failed to stop me from thinking. To a take further step, the futility of the dream argument has also to be established. Just as Descartes introduced demon and later diffused him, similarly in the Sixth Meditation he also rejected the dream argument. Once the demon served the purpose, he was not required. Similarly, once the dream argument served the purpose, it was not required. In the First Meditation Descartes raised the question whether he is awake or asleep. This question was raised because he could not find any marked difference between the dreaming and the waking states. Dream appeared to him as an exact replica of waking experience. We cannot even say that a dream is a replica. If both of them completely resemble each other, then anyone of them could be a replica of the other. By the time Descartes reaches the Sixth Meditation, the dream argument lost its charm. He introduces memory in connection with the waking experience. The presence of memory makes waking experiences coherent and gives them identity, which is different from the identity of dreams. His journey through different Meditations is terminated with the remark, in the Sixth Meditation, "the exaggerated doubts of last few days should be dismissed as laughable." His argument certainly led to the exaggerated doubts, which required to be dismissed as laughable. In the First Meditation he was unable to distinguish between 'being asleep' and 'being awake', but now in the Sixth Meditation he accepts that there is a vast difference between the two to distinguish dream from awaking state. He finally remarks, "when I distinctly see where things come from and where and when they come to and... when I can connect my perceptions of them with the whole of the rest of my life without a break, then I am quite certain that when I encounter these things I am not asleep but awake." What appears to Descartes now as a laughable matter at the completion of his journey, was an extremely serious matter at the start of his journey. He provoked G.E. Moore to struggle throughout his life against the dream argument.
The dream argument successfully excluded the external world from our realm of experiences, and Moore had to do hard labour to bring the external world back. Many other philosophers of this century like Wittgenstein, Malcolm, Bouwsma had given their valuable time for the dream argument.

Though Moore does not refer to Descartes by name, his lecture on "Certainty" was completely devoted to the First Meditation of Descartes. The opening lines of Moore's lecture remind one about Descartes' reference to dreaming. Moore initiates by writing, "I am at present, as you can all see, in a room and not in the open air; I am standing up, and not either sitting or lying down: I have clothes on, and am not absolutely naked." In his lecture Moore tries to show that the assertions he made were free from doubt. He argues, the fact that he cannot prove that he is not dreaming, does not mean he does not know that he is not dreaming. At the conclusive stage of the lecture he comments, "...I cannot see my way to deny that it is logically possible that the sensory experiences I am having now should be mere dream-images... But the conjunction of my memories of the immediate past with these sensory experiences may be sufficient to enable me to know that I am not dreaming." This shows that sensory experiences, alone are not sufficient to show that one is awake. But sensory experiences, coupled with memories, may enable one to know that he is not dreaming. This is similar to the Cartesian position in the Sixth Meditation. Descartes too has summoned memory to help him in showing that he is awake. Both Bouwsma and Malcolm have attacked the Cartesian question 'Am I awake or asleep?' Both try to show that this question makes sense only in certain circumstances. Clarifying Descartes' position Bouwsma writes, "...if it is a good argument, it remains a good argument even though no man at any time has been deceived by the senses. The argument does not depend in any way upon any instance of deception." Not an actual dream, but the possibility of a dream, is sufficient for Descartes' argument. The possibility of a dream can be explained to someone by pointing out that the object, which he sees in dreams, has no physical existence. If
someone knows what it is to have a dream experience without ever having a dream, he can consider the possibility of his present experience to be a dream experience.

Bouwsma tries to show that there is incoherence in Descartes’ argument. Descartes begins with the clear-cut distinction between dream experience and waking experience. Without this distinction the argument cannot proceed. At the conclusion of the argument Descartes converts even waking experience into the dream experience. This makes the argument incoherent. To expose Descartes’ argument Bouwsma brings the analogy of a garden and its reflection. In his analogy “garden” stands for waking experience and the “reflection” for the dream. The steps, which a Cartesian has taken, are the following:

“(a). One is a garden and one is a reflection, but there is no way of knowing which is which.
(b). There are two gardens.
(c). There are two reflections.”

Bouwsma means to say that there is something wrong in converting a waking experience into a dreaming experience, if one has started with the distinction between the two.

Norman Malcolm considers the situation in which the question ‘am I awake?’ makes sense. He makes the distinction between ordinary sleep and sound sleep. Sound sleep is that state in which one is not disturbed by dreams. In such a state the question ‘am I sleeping’ cannot be raised. As a matter of fact this question can be raised only when I am getting up from the sleep, not fully awake, not fully sleeping. There are certain situations in which one can doubt whether one is sleeping or awake. But Descartes is committed to the philosophical position, which leads him to say what he says. It defines mind in terms of thinking. So a man has continuous thinking whether he has a sound sleep or a disturbed sleep. So Descartes’ question ‘Am I sleeping?’ is not the result of empirical investigation of situations. It is the result of commitment to a
philosophical view. Yet this commitment continues only till the Sixth Meditation. As we have pointed out that Descartes himself does not allow senses to continue deceiving him for all times. Descartes was certainly an aspirant for having absolutely certain knowledge. In order to have such knowledge he was led to doubt. For the operation of doubt, he used the dream argument, and later the demon argument. All this was done in order to arrive at absolutely certain knowledge. Once a piece of knowledge is obtained, the dream argument became futile, so also so became the fate of the demon argument.

3. HUME'S SCEPTICISM:

Hume appears to be quite different from both Descartes and Sextus Empiricus. He carries a distinct philosophical identity. Descartes used his Scepticism, not for its own sake but for transcending it. Cartesian Scepticism gave birth to certainty. For Descartes Scepticism is not a doctrine but only a method. So he was clearly against Sextus. Hume was quite different. At places it appears that Hume was not a universal doubter like Sextus, not even like Descartes. One would feel that Hume was not sceptical about knowledge as such, like Sextus. He was sceptical only about some areas of knowledge. He rejected some knowledge claims without rejecting all of them. If he took up a sceptical stand on some aspects, then he did not waver from that stand. This attitude was like that of Sextus and quite unlike that of Descartes.

Hume exhibits his sceptical doubts concerning understanding in his Enquiries with the distinction between 'the relation of ideas' and 'the matters of fact'. Geometry and arithmetic come under the relations of ideas. Judgements in these areas do not become true or false because of reality. We have already seen in Descartes that his dream argument fails to introduce doubts about their truth. Their truth, according to Hume, depends on the relations of ideas. So Hume is quite unlike Sextus and Descartes. For Sextus, all judgements have equal value, because all of them can be opposed. But

35
Descartes succeeded even in doubting geometry and arithmetic with the help of his demon argument. But for Hume these judgements are beyond all doubts. The Cartesian demon did not disturb him. These judgements are through and through conceptual. As Hume remarks, "propositions of this kind are discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe. Though there never were a circle or triangle in nature, the truths demonstrated by Euclid would for ever retain their certainty and evidence."^6

In order to understand Hume's position, let us consider the Part 4, Book 1 of The Treatise of Human Nature. In this part, the Section Two is devoted to Scepticism with regard to the senses. Hume is led to reflect: "we may well ask, what causes induce us to believe in the existence of body? But 'tis in vain to ask, Whether there be body or not? That is a point, which we must take for granted in all our reasonings."^7 Hume makes a fine distinction between the question, whether there exists an external world, and the question, how have we come to believe in the existence of such a world? Hume has no doubt that we do happen to have a belief in the external world. What interests him so much is not the question, whether there is any external world, but the question what induces him to believe in the external world. The concept of the external world that is accepted by an ordinary man is quite naive. It is believed that the objects continue to exist when they are not perceived, and the percepts themselves are part of this world and exist along with the objects, which they perceive. Percepts and their perceptions may be destroyed without the objects being destroyed. In short, the objects do not depend on us for their existence. Hume makes an attempt to demolish this picture of the external world. In Hume's own words the issue that interests him is: "why we attribute a CONTINUOUS existence to objects, even when they are not present to the senses; and why we suppose them to have an existence DISTINCT from the mind and perception."^8 There are three possibilities. It is possible that our senses have provided us the opinion of a continued and distinct existence of objects. If not the sense, then the reason might
have been the source. If neither reason nor senses are the sources, then the source may be imagination.

According to Hume, the mind's limit is perception: It is acquainted only with its perception. So existence of an object for Hume meant the same as the existence of perception. But perceptions are not continuous. Their existence is always short lived. There are interruptions in our perception. I am looking at a given direction and the perception of the church tower occurs, I turned my head towards another direction, and as result, I see the chimney of a mill. So the perception with the church is interrupted, another perception that of a factory's chimney occurs. Like this, one after the other, newer and newer perceptions continue. So our perception occurs in a discontinuous fashion. There is no such thing as the continuity of one and the same perception. As Hume remarks, "everything, which appears to the mind, is nothing but a perception, and is interrupted, and dependent on the mind."

To accept the existence of an external world is to accept a double existence, the existence of something as perception and its existence beyond perception. Hume rejects such a double existence. According to Hume, "there is only a single existence... which I shall call indifferently object or perception, according as it shall seem best suit my purpose." So Hume's strategy is clear. He wishes to show that the continuous and independent existence of an object simply means the existence of unperceived perceptions. But this is certainly absurd.

To understand Hume's strategy we must be careful about the distinction between the qualitative identity and numerical identity. Sometimes numerically the same object may present two qualitatively different appearances. A person acting as a hero on the stage is the same person as the husband of a woman. The appearance as a hero is qualitatively different from the appearance as a husband. This is different from the case of a tomato and an apple, presenting qualitatively the same appearance. In the former case we say that the hero is numerically identical with the husband, though his
appearances are qualitatively different. In the later case the appearances are qualitatively the same, but having numerically different objects. Hume is trying to show, in his rejection of the external world, that the qualitative identity of an object with another object is confused with its numerical identity.

Perceptions occur in a sequence, one after the other. As soon as the interruption in a perception occurs there is also an interruption in its existence. In a given series of perceptions, some perceptions may be qualitatively different and others qualitatively alike, but no perception is numerically same as the other perception. This implies that no two different perceptions are numerically the same perception. Consider Hume's remark, "The very image, which is present to the senses, is with us the real body; and 'tis to these interrupted images we ascribe a perfect identity..." The smooth passage of the imagination along the ideas of the resembling perceptions makes us ascribe to them a perfect identity. The interrupted manner of their appearance makes us consider them as so many resembling, but still distinct beings, which appear after certain intervals. The perplexity arising from this contradiction produces a propension to unite these broken appearances by the fiction of a continu'd existence." What Hume means is that different images or perceptions occurring at different times have their distinct existences. But some images or perceptions are qualitatively the same. Our faculty of imagination provides numerical identity to the resembling perceptions. For numerical identity Hume uses the expression 'perfect identity'. This means, if the perceptions had been deprived of resemblance or qualitative identity, they would also be deprived of the perfect identity (Hume's expression) or numerical identity. So it is the faculty of imagination in us which is responsible for introducing continuous and independent existence. But perceptions can never be either continuous or independent of our mind. The conclusion is clear, that the continued and independent existence of objects is the fiction of our mind, and this fiction has been generated by the imagination. If all perceptions had been qualitatively different from each other then the fiction of the
continued and independent existence of objects would have never arisen. So Hume ultimately blames not senses or reason but imagination for letting us believe in the existence of external reality. But this belief is obviously false.

Hume's analysis of primary and secondary qualities also leads to the denial of the external world. Berkeley already established before Hume that the secondary qualities such as colours, sounds etc. are mere perceptions, and so over the primary qualities, which allow the occurrence of the secondary qualities. Locke was wrong in making the distinction between the two. Hume accepts Berkeley's conclusions. If colours, sounds, motion, extension etc. are only our perceptions then there remains nothing in the world which is continuous and independent of existence. As he writes, "If colours, sounds, tastes, and smells be merely perceptions, nothing we can conceive is possest of a real continu'd and independent existence: not even motion, extension and solidity which are the primary qualities chiefly insisted on." 62 Primary qualities are nothing but those that make the operation of secondary qualities possible. It is obvious that there is no charm in accepting the hypothesis of an external world if that world is devoid of colour, sound, taste, motion, extension etc. It is said that the world of scientists is devoid of secondary qualities, but even such a world is not devoid of motion. Whatever status is given to occupiers of such a world, these occupiers are in constant motion.

Concerning Hume's notion of causality, it would be wrong to say, that he denied the relation of causality. He was concerned only with the analysis of this relation. Of course, he denied that causal relation is a logical relation. So also he denied the explanation of cause in terms of force, energy, etc. Consider the following remark of Hume's, "The idea of cause and effect is deriv'd from experience, which presenting us with certain objects constantly conjoin'd with each other, produces such a habit of surveying them in that relation, that we cannot without a sensible violence survey them in any other." 63 Hume means to say that when two objects occur, one after the other,
and continue reoccurring in the same fashion again and again, then we are led to say that one of them is the cause and another one is the effect. That which occurs earlier is the cause and that which occurs later is the effect. We develop a habit to see them like that. The habit to consider two objects causally connected depends on the frequency of instances. As Hume remarks, "As the habit, which produces the association, arises from the frequent conjunction of objects, it must arrive at its perfection by degrees, and must acquire new force from each instance, that falls under our observation." If the conjunction of objects does not occur frequently, then this conjunction would be a matter of chance. One would say, it was only a chance that the objects are found together. The objects that have causal relation are contiguous in space and time, and one that precedes, is the cause and the other that proceeds is the effect. As Hume says referring to them, "that they are contiguous in time and place and that the object we call cause precedes the other we call effect." So the relation of contiguity and that of precedence are necessary to the relation of causation. Contiguity is essential for the relation of causation otherwise conjoining will be impossible. It is again a definitional matter that a cause does not occur after the effect, that the cause occurs before the effect.

With one stroke Hume rejects the explanation of causation in terms of efficacy, agency, power, force, energy, necessity, connection, and productive quality etc. His argument is that all these terms "are nearly synonymous and therefore 'tis an absurdity to employ any of them in defining the rest. By this observation we reject at once all the vulgar definitions, which philosophers have given of power and efficacy." If there had been any such thing as causal power, it would have been possible for us to have its impressions on our mind. But, according to Hume, "we never have any impression, that contains any power or efficacy. We never therefore have any idea of power."

Consider now the necessary connection. It is said that cause and effect are necessarily connected. This differentiates causal relation from other kinds of relations.
If there is no necessary connection then it is impossible to infer a given effect from a given cause. Hume has given a sceptical solution to this problem. According to Hume, the idea of necessity can arise only from some impression, but there is no impression of necessity. So Hume concludes, "necessity is something, that exists in mind, not in objects... Either we have no idea of necessity, or necessity is nothing but that determination of the thought to pass from causes to effects and from effects to causes, according to their experience'd union." Hume was led to give two definitions of the relation between cause and effect, one of them philosophical and the other natural. The first definition reads, "An object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are place'd in like relations of presidency and contiguity to those objects, that resemble the latter." And the second definition reads, "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 first definition simply places the objects in the causal situation. In the second definition the emphasis is on how the mind moves from one to the other. So the second definition stresses on the mental operation.

Hume's views on induction have attracted the attention of the eminent philosophers of our age. According to him, induction cannot be justified. But this does not mean that we do not operate with inductive reasoning. Though not justified, it would have been impossible to live in this world without inductive reasoning. When we are thirsty we take water and thirst is quenched. In the past I have observed that water quenches thirst. The inductive generalization that water quenches thirst was obtained by observing several instances. But what is the guarantee that this generalization will hold good in the future? What is the guarantee that future would resemble the past? May be tomorrow when I take water I die, so instead of quenching thirst water kills me. Same difficulties hold with all the inductive generalizations like 'food satisfies hunger', 'arsenic is poisonous', 'fire burns' and so on. Hume says, "that the supposition that the
future resembles the past, is not founded on arguments of any kind, but is deriv'd entirely from habit, by which we are determin'd to expect for the future the same train of objects, to which we have been accustom'd. So ground for accepting inductive generalization is not any kind of reasoning, but the habit of our mind. One may argue that the future resembles the past simply because the nature is uniform. It is not the case that one part of nature behaves one way and another part another way. Hume argues that, "instances, of which we have had no experience, must resemble those, of which we have had experience, and that the course of nature continues always uniformly the same." But how does one know that nature is uniform? For uniformity of nature we take help of induction: from time immemorial water quenched thirst, food satisfied hunger, fire burned etc. In the past I made predictions about the future, and when the futures became present, then those predictions were satisfied. An expectation is formed, what happened about these past-futures will also happen about the future-futures. Nature is obviously uniform. But all this shows that the uniformity of nature is grounded in induction. So induction is used to justify uniformity of nature and the uniformity of nature is used to justify induction. This is a vicious circle. If induction itself's required to justify the uniformity of nature, then uniformity of nature cannot be used to justify induction. Inductive beliefs are the result of our habit. They are not the result of any kind of arguments. It is on the ground of our past experience that we expect the things to happen in the future. But all future predictions are probable only and can never reach certainty, because the negation of a future prediction does not involve a contradiction in terms. Negation of such a prediction is possible. This simply means that there is no guarantee that future-futures will resemble the past-futures. Though there is no guarantee, yet I expect them to so resemble.

Prior to Hume, the views about the self and its identity that were in circulation were none but those of Descartes and Hobbes. Though an empiricist Locke retained the Cartesian dualism of mind and body. Hobbes believed only in physical bodies.
abolishing the mental substance. Berkeley, in opposition to Hobbes, abolished the material substance, retained only the mental substance. So it is not only Descartes who talked about mental substance, Locke and Berkeley also did the same. Hume attacks the concept of mental substance, refusing to accept the soul or self as any kind of substance. It is said about substance that it exists by itself. This definition hardly distinguishes substance from things that are not substances. Even perceptions become substances. As Hume remarks, “all our perceptions are different from each other, and from everything else in the universe, they are also distinct and separable, and may be consider’d as separately existent, and may exist separately, and have no need of anything else to support their existence. There are, therefore, substances.” It is clear that in Hume’s philosophy perceptions play a major role. They are the foundational truths of Hume’s philosophy. The existence of perceptions has been given so much importance by Hume that their existence is sufficient to oust substances. As Hume remarks, “we have no perfect idea of anything but of a perception. A substance is entirely different from a perception. We have, therefore, no need of a substance.” Hume has ruled out the possibility of considering the soul or self as a substance, mental or material, in which perceptions are supposed to inhere.

Though one may not agree with Hume on his views concerning personal identity, his analysis of this notion is insightful. (For his analysis see section six of part four, book one, of Hume’s _Treatise of Human Nature_.) Hume disagrees with both of his predecessors, Berkeley and Locke, for converting perceptions into dependent type of entities. Thoughts are supposed to be thoughts of someone. Hume is unable to accept this view. He says, “All these (perceptions) are different, and distinguishable, and separable from each other, and may be separately consider’d and may exist separately and have no need of anything to support their existence.” This shows the possibility of there being perceptions without being perceptions of anyone.
It is said about the self that it resides inside. So Hume searches for this self looking into himself, to his great shock he fails to catch the self. As he observes, “when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception and never can observe anything but the perceptions.” This thought-experiment shows that Hume took for granted that self is also a kind of object that can be detected through the sense. He took for granted that it is not very unlike a sound, a taste, a small, etc. Hume hoped to have an encounter with the self. But self is not the kind of object, which could be seen, touched, smelled or tasted etc. The self is supposed to be that which makes seeing, tasting, hearing etc. possible. The self is a presupposition of their existence. This would be leading towards Kant.

What is the nature of myself, and my fellow beings? Hume’s response is very simple. He maintains that a man is “nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.” So different persons are the different bundles of perceptions. Even the numerical difference between persons depends on the numerical difference between the perceptions. There is no such thing as numerically the same perception, belonging to two different bundles of perceptions. Each perception belong only to one bundle. Crudely speaking, this view means simply, I think my thoughts and you think yours. The perceptions that occur in a bundle, occur by accident. There is no principle that unites them. Hume refuses to accept any principle that unites different perceptions. According to Hume, “The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations.” The theatre example is simply to show that certain perceptions may resemble each other, but they are different. Mind has been presented as a passive receptor of perceptions.
Hume makes a distinction between identity and diversity. He thinks that sometimes diversity is confused with identity. By diversity Hume means succession of related objects. He also thinks that sometimes numerical identity is also confused with identity arising out of resemblance. Hume's attempt is to reject any hidden principle of unity. Such a principle is not required. Soul is not something over and above its perceptions. As he says, "I cannot compare the soul more properly to anything than to a republic or commonwealth, in which the several members are united by the reciprocal ties of government and subordination." Members in this remark refer to human perceptions. A soul is a commonwealth of perceptions. These perceptions are reciprocal type. The commonwealth services through its members. There is no such thing as a hidden commonwealth over and above its members. So also there is no such thing as hidden soul over and above its perceptions. To talk about the soul is to talk about perceptions only.

Sometimes people introduce identity even in the cases in which there is diversity. Hume cites two examples, that of a church and of a ship. Imagine that a given church is destroyed and the parish rebuilt the same church. In this case neither the form nor the material are the same. Yet the inhabitants of the parish call it the same church. Similar is the case of a ship, which in due course became quite a new ship because of frequent reparation. Yet we call these two ships the same. Hume finds that both vegetables and animals are not very unlike the church and the ship. There occurs total change in them. Yet we call them the same. Hume concludes, "The identity, which we ascribe to the mind of man, is only a fictitious one, and of a like kind with that which we ascribe to vegetables and animal bodies." The identity is fictitious because they are the cases of diversity. Our decision that it is the same ship or the same church is only verbal. There could have been nothing wrong if we would have said that neither the church nor the ship was the same. Hume concludes discussion on this issue with the penetrating
remark, "that all the nice and subtle questions concerning personal identity can never possibly be decided, and are to be regarded rather as grammatical than as philosophical difficulties."81 So Hume is quite unlike all contemporary philosophers who reduced philosophical difficulties to grammatical difficulties. But for Hume philosophical difficulties are serious and quite unlike grammatical difficulties. For him the issues of personal identity are riddled with grammatical difficulties. The solution of these difficulties does not make any changes in the objects. Hume has certainly not made only a grammatical move when he introduced memory in connection with the discussion of the mind. Perceptions not only occur; some of them also recur. This recurrence is possible because of memory. When a perception is remembered, then remembered perceptions resemble the original perception. So memory binds the two perceptions. Memory occurs as a relation between perceptions. Hume thinks that, "the memory not only discovers the identity, but also contributes to its production, by producing the relation of resemblance among the perceptions. The case is the same whether we consider ourselves or others."82 My memory unites the perceptions that occur to me, and your memory unites the perceptions, which occur to you. So memory becomes the source of personal identity. Hume's reference to memory in the case of human beings totally distinguishes human identity from the identity of the ships and the churches. Neither the ships of any kind nor the churches of any kind happen to possess memories. So also vegetable and animal bodies are not supposed to possess memories. But memory simply cannot be a criterion of personal identity, because personal identity is presupposed by memory. Unless I know myself it is impossible to know my memories. Instead of clarifying the issue of personal identity, Hume has introduced difficulties for its explanation.

Lastly, consider Hume's Scepticism. Though Hume denied on many occasions in his work that he was a complete Pyrrhonian, many philosophers of repute consider him as a committed Pyrrhonian. In Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature, John
Laird remarked that "Hume remained a complete Pyrrhonian regarding all ultimate principles." Poptin too considers Hume a complete Pyrrhonian. A poem equating Hume with Pyrrho has been quoted by Hume in one of his letters. The poem reads:

"The wise in every age conclude,
What Pyrrho taught and Hume renewed,
That dogmatists are fools."

The fact that Hume valued this poem so much so that he quoted it in one of his letters shows that Hume had high regard for Pyrrhonian thought and did not mind himself to be considered as a follower of Pyrrho's thought. Then what led Hume to write against Pyrrho? The sorts of things he wrote against Pyrrho exhibit his misunderstanding of Pyrrho. Once these misunderstandings are removed, Hume is closer to the Pyrrhonian thought than to any other philosophical thought.

Consider some of the arguments of Hume made against Pyrrhonism. According to Hume, "The great subverter of Pyrrhonism or the excessive principles of Scepticism is action and employment, and the occupations of common life." This remark against Pyrrhonism clearly shows that Pyrrhonism involves not only the suspension of belief and judgements but also the suspension of action. Therefore, once we involve ourselves in action, needless to say no life is possible without this involvement, we have to give up suspension of action. Perhaps Pyrrho's life style has given this impression. However, we should not forget that he lived for 90 years and those years were full of action. Suspension of judgements and beliefs certainly does not mean suspension of action. Hume even praised Copernicus, Ptolemy, Stoics and Epicureans for giving us something. But, Pyrrhonians had hardly any influence on his mind. As he writes, "a Pyrrhonian cannot expect, that his philosophy will have any constant influence on the mind: or if it had, that its influence would be beneficial to society. On the contrary, he must acknowledge, if he will acknowledge anything, that all human life must perish, were his principles universally and steadily to prevail. All discourse, all action would
immediately cease; and men remain in a total lethargy, till the necessities of the nature, unsatisfied, put an end to their miserable existence." Unfortunately nature could not put an end to the existence of Pyrrho, the father of Scepticism. He stops real discourses but not action. The doctrine of ataraxia was introduced by him for promoting human life, rather than killing life. Hume certainly has a wrong picture of Pyrrho’s thought. Consider a further remark against Pyrrhonism. He says, “Though a Pyrrhonian may throw himself or others in a momentary amazement and confusion by profound reasonings; the first and most trivial event in life will put to flight all his doubts and scruples.... When he awakes from his dream, he will be the first to join in the laugh against himself, and to confess, that all his objections are mere amusement.” Hume accepts that the Pyrrhonian reason was profound. However, in this context it seems that he has a picture of Cartesian doubter, confusing him to be a Pyrrhonian doubter. Descartes, as we have already seen in the First Meditation, was an extremely serious doubter, but soon after reaching sixth Meditation he was the first to join in the laugh against himself. Rejection of Pyrrhonian scepticism, which for Hume meant excessive scepticism, led him to adopt the position of moderate scepticism, he calls it mitigated scepticism or academic philosophy. This is like adopting Aristotle’s golden mean. Rejecting excessive scepticism on the one hand and dogmatism on the other. Referring to his own variety of scepticism he writes, “There is, indeed, a more mitigated scepticism or academical philosophy, which may be both durable and useful, and which may, in part, be the result of this Pyrrhonism, or excessive scepticism, When its undistinguished doubts are, in some measure, corrected by common sense and reflection.” But the attitude of Scepticism that Hume adopted both in his Treatise and Enquiries is not the result of commonsense or following the nature; it is the result of following Pyrrho. According Christopher Hookway, “Hume’s arguments often resemble the modes of Agrippa, and his insistence that judgement results from custom and imagination rather than from reason or understanding amounts to an admission that there is no defensible criterion of truth.” In his work Sextus has discussed all the five
modes of Agrippa. According Christopher Hookway, even Hume’s refusal to have any rational justification for induction employs “arguments of a familiar Agrippan form.”  

Hume certainly fails to discover any criterion for determining which of conflicting judgements one should accept. His position is completely like Pyrrho. When he questions himself, “Can I be sure, that in leaving all establish’d opinions I am following truth; and by what criterion shall I distinguish her, even if fortune shou’d at last guide me on her foot-steps?” This is the Pyrrhonian bewilderment. Any criterion that I choose is doubted, be it mine or someone else’s.

According to Popkin, “There are two important points which Hume never recognised as part of the Pyrrhonian thesis, and therefore attacked the Pyrrhonians for omitting, first that we cannot remain wholly inactive, and second, that sensation and thought are natural occurrences and are to be accepted as such.” Sextus would agree with Hume that we couldn’t remain wholly inactive. So also he would not disagree with Hume that sensation and thought are natural occurrences, we are forced to have them. So Sextus too becomes a mitigated sceptic. Sextus was a Hume in ancient times, as Hume was a Sextus of modern age.

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