David Hume (1711-1776) is the most influential of all British Empiricists. Last philosopher of Enlightenment, Hume, by clarity of his mind and resolution to think in concrete terms made constructive and enduring contributions to philosophy. He is known as a major influence on contemporary (20th century) philosophy especially on analytic movement. This is the reason why we have taken up a comparative study of Hume and the leading analytic philosopher, Bertrand Russell. In the history of modern philosophy Hume is taken as a skeptic, and this sceptical tendency of Hume stirred Immanuel Kant out of his dogmatic slumber.¹ Before reading Hume, Kant had uncritically assumed that it is possible to have apriori knowledge about the basic matters of fact covered by general metaphysics. After reading them, he realized that the possibility of such knowledge is highly problematic and needed justification.²

At present Hume is regarded as the most important empiricist philosopher. Hume's empiricism is expressed in his axiom that all our ideas are derived from impressions. In this chapter we will critically analyze this position of Hume that all our knowledge result from impressions and ideas only. Because this means that if something is not given in experience we cannot assume that it exists. But the truth of the matter is, we have knowledge of objects and events whose impressions we do not have. Hume's ontology is contained in his belief that human self is a bundle of different perceptions which succeed one another. This denies, according to us, mind the status of a substance that survives through past, present and future. If this status is denied, then the question of human being acquiring (not momentary but lasting)

knowledge is forcefully ruled out. While dealing with Hume’s ontology, we also try to address the question whether a momentary self can have lasting knowledge or not?

In this chapter we will critically analyze Hume’s epistemology and ontology. Hume is preoccupied with the origin and nature of human knowledge. His aim is to establish a science of human mind on firm foundations, and then use it to solve the main problems of philosophy. How far Hume is successful in his endeavours is what we are going to bring out through this chapter.

I. Epistemology

About the origin of knowledge, Hume is of the opinion that impressions and ideas are the basis of our knowledge. Hume says, “All the perceptions of human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call impressions and ideas.” All materials of our thinking are derived from outward and inward impressions. Impressions are ‘all our sensations, passions and emotions as they make their first appearance in the soul’. For Hume, ideas are derived from impressions. “By ideas I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning; such as, for instance, are all the perceptions excited by the present discourse, excepting only those which arise from the sight and touch, and excepting the immediate pleasure or uneasiness it may occasion.”

In part I, section XII of An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding Hume writes, “...nothing can be ever present to the mind but an image or perception, and that the senses are only the inlets through which these images are conveyed, without being able to produce any immediate intercourse between the mind and the object.”

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4Ibid.
Here Hume assumes that through sense experience, the mind is furnished only with impressions and ideas and it is not possible to know the existence of anything that is supposed to be other than 'perceptions', that is, impressions and ideas. This means that he reduces material substance to impressions and ideas. Opposing this initial assumption of Hume, Bruce Aune holds, "Our senses disclose perceptual objects to us; they are not inlets through which mysterious representations are conveyed. In contrasting an imaginary and bizarre instinctive supposition with the object of an erroneous (or confused) philosophical lesson, Hume opened his discussion with a serious blunder that started him off in the wrong direction." Aune criticizes Hume because Hume treats senses as inlets for impressions and ideas that he considers being the intermediaries between the external world and us. But, like Aune we argue that through our senses we are acquainted with external world and objective reality. Therefore, we agree with Aune that Hume's initial assumption is in the wrong direction.

As we have seen, for Hume, all our thoughts or 'ideas' are copies of impressions. Impressions are more lively perceptions that enter into us with most force and vivacity, and ideas are less lively perceptions. But all ideas are images or faint copies of impressions do not imply that all ideas know their corresponding impressions perfectly. It will be appropriate to quote J. Laird here who states, "...the mere fact...that ideas are derived from impressions surely does not prove, or even suggest, that every idea is so very wise as to know its own father, or even as to know what it has a pedigree of any kind." It may be noted here that for Hume 'ideas and impressions appear always to correspond to each other.' But Laird like us maintains that it is not necessary that every idea knows its origin. That is, we have no knowledge of an objective reality from which impressions and ideas originate. In this context, we also agree with James Orr who criticizes Hume as follows, "He has not really proved

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8 David Hume, 1961, p.12.
that every idea is the copy of a previous impression, but has only thrown the *onus* of proof on those who differ from him." 9 Twentieth century analytic movement owes tremendously to Hume regarding the foundations of empirical knowledge. This becomes obvious from the following comments of a prominent analytic philosopher A. J. Ayer. Ayer shares Hume's views regarding impressions as the immediate data of our sense perception; this distinguishes impressions from ideas, which are copies of impressions. Ayer says, "The salient feature of impressions is not their force or vividness but their immediacy." 10 At this point we criticize both Hume and Ayer, as both of them do not refer to any objective sources of impressions but interpret them only in their relation to mind.

Since in this chapter we are dealing with the word 'impression' in detail, as used by Hume, it will be appropriate to distinguish it from the layman's usage. The word 'impression' can be used in three different ways. They are:

1. In common parlance, we use the word impression in the context of two bodies interacting upon one another. For instance, when we walk on the wet sand, we leave an impression on it. Alternatively, we can say that the wet sand gets an impression of our feet.

2. Second sense is as in the impressionist school of art. The impressionist painter attempts to reflect the reality exactly as it is, on the canvas - as it is projected to the eyes.

3. This is the sense in which Hume uses it. Here it is not due to the interaction of two bodies, as Hume's impressions do not have a material basis to make their marks. (Because Hume denies the existence of material bodies and therefore impressions are the only existents).

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Hume gives preference to impressions in terms of order and importance. Therefore, let us examine this in detail. Hume believes that there are two kinds of impressions: impressions of sensations and impressions of reflections. Hume writes, "Impressions may be divided into two kinds, those of sensation, and those of reflection. The first kind arises in the soul originally, from unknown causes. The second is derived in a great measure, from our ideas." According to Hume, outward impressions or impressions of sensations arise in the soul from unknown causes. It may be noted that Hume holds two different views regarding the existence of the cause of outward impressions. First view is that the cause of impressions is there, but it is unknown to us. Second view says that since we are presented only with impressions without their causes, it is equally good as saying that their causes do not exist. And inward impressions or impressions of reflections arise from our own ideas. By inward impression, Hume means passions, desires and emotions. (In the context of self, Hume uses the term perception also to mean impressions of reflections. Further explanation can be seen along with the discussion of Hume's concept of self.)

In this discussion of Hume's distinction of impressions into two kinds, we may quote N.K. Smith who regards Hume's impressions and ideas as "a modification of Locke's doctrine of sensation and reflection." As we have seen, for John Locke, the predecessor of Hume, sensation is caused by an external object and reflection is caused by the internal states of mind. So Smith holds that the distinction between impressions and ideas made by Hume following John Locke lies in the fact that impressions have their source in the outer world and ideas have their source in the mind. According to Smith, Hume insists as vigorously as Locke does, on the limitations imposed on understanding by bodily senses. And the source he looks for feeling, sentiments, etc., are impressions of reflections. We agree with N. K. Smith that Hume's theory of origin of knowledge resembles Locke's theory of origin of

11 David Hume, 1961, pp.16-17.
knowledge as both maintain that sensations in abstractions are the source of knowledge (abstractions because abstracting sensations from material objects which are unknown and unknowable) and simple ideas of sensation and reflection/impressions and ideas which are mental in nature as the object of knowledge.

Hume in his work, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, gives a proper description how an idea is formed from an impression. He writes, “An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain, of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflection, because derived from it. These again are copied by memory and imagination, and become ideas.”

It may be pointed out here that Hume has used two more concepts besides impressions and ideas, such as memory and imagination. We will analyze these concepts later in this chapter and will show that they are used differently from a layman’s usage.

Here we argue that when discussing about origin of impressions and ideas, Hume assumes a mind upon which impressions are formed. But in his ontology, as we will discuss shortly, he denies the existence of mind. Here is a contradiction in Hume. In this context, we may aptly quote James Orr: “While professing to start only with impressions and ideas, Hume constantly allows himself in the use of ordinary terminology of mind. He disavows, indeed, any assumption as to the origin of impressions. These ‘arise in the soul’, he tells us, ‘from unknown causes’. But, ...he does not disavow in the same way, a “mind” or “soul” as the seat of these impressions.”

14 David Hume, 1961, p.17.
Another instance where Hume contradicts his position is, while constructing material substance and self out of impressions and ideas; here he makes use of the laws of association, which in their turn depend upon memory and imagination. This again is impossible without a mind that remembers and imagines. N. K. Smith also agrees with our view that Hume implicitly accepts the existence of an active identical mind, on which is based all his analysis. Smith says, “So far indeed, Hume has denied the existence of continuing self, that...he seeks the solution of his problems, both theoretical and moral, in that ‘human nature’ – determinant of our perceptions, propensities, instincts, feelings and emotions – which is but self under another name.” Smith tries to bring home the point that Hume presupposes a mind and without a mind the mentioned mental activities (memory, imagination) would not have taken place.

Coming back to Hume’s impressions, in order to confine the jurisdiction of knowledge to impressions and their copies along with other mental activities, he distinguishes impressions into two – simple and complex. Also, through this distinction he tries, as he claims, “to limit the general decision that all our ideas and impressions are resembling.” He, however, does not deny the above maxim for simple ideas. He maintains, “...that every simple idea has a simple impression, which resembles it, and every simple impression a correspondent idea.” He adds, “...the order of their first appearance...that simple impressions always take the precedence of their correspondent ideas...and is only different in the degrees of force and liveliness.” This implies that simple ideas are derived only from simple impressions and the difference between them is only in their degree and not in nature.

It is to be noted that for Hume, through perceiving or feeling we get impressions and through thinking we get ideas. That is the difference between

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17 David Hume, 1961, p.12.
18 Ibid., p.13
19 Ibid., p.14
perceiving and feeling and thinking is similar to the difference between the kinds of perceptions that are before the mind. Here it seems to us that Hume is equating the difference between 'impressions' and 'ideas' in terms of force and liveliness. Barry Stroud disagrees with Hume's distinction. He is of the view that no such distinction between impression and ideas can be drawn. Barry Stroud rightly asks, "Are the two distinctions really the same? Is the difference between perceiving and thinking simply a difference between degree of force and liveliness with which certain 'objects' strike upon the mind?" 

Like Stroud, we also maintain that before deciding whether the acts of perceiving and thinking differ in their degrees of force and liveliness or in nature we need to understand what Hume means by 'degrees of force and liveliness' and how are they to be recognized. Hume cannot help us here as he sees no need to draw the distinction since, "every one of him self will readily perceive the difference betwixt feeling and thinking." 

About complex ideas Hume is of the view that it is not necessary that all our complex ideas exactly resemble the corresponding complex impressions. To quote Hume, "I observe that many of our complex ideas never had impressions that corresponded to them, and that many of our complex impressions never exactly copied in ideas, I can imagine to my self such a city as New Jerusalem, whose pavement is gold, and walls are rubies, I never saw any such. I have seen Paris, but shall I affirm I can form such an idea of that city, as will perfectly represent all its streets and houses in their real and just propositions?" 

Hume conveys here that though there is a considerable amount of resemblance between our complex impressions and ideas, it is not without exception. He claims that this is because a complex consists of components. Hume illustrates this with an example. "The complex", he explains, "...may be distinguished into parts. Though a particular color, taste and smell are qualities all united together in this apple, it is easy to perceive they are not the same.

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21 David Hume, 1961, p.11.
but are at least distinguishable from each other." It should be noted that even in his examples he assumes the existence of material substance such as apple, which he denies in his theory. In this context, Suman Gupta appropriately comments, "Hume...constantly assumed the existence of material world although his aim was to deny it. This is bound to be the case because our language, which Hume also had to use, is meant to communicate a real world and not the distorted world view of the idealist philosopher." We are in agreement with Suman Gupta since throughout his theory of knowledge, Hume maintains that impressions and ideas are the only entities, which exist and consequently can be known by us; then to vindicate his points he cannot abruptly assert the existence of some thing which he actually denies. But he gives precedence to impressions since he holds that they occur first in all cases and can survive without giving rise to an idea but not the other way round. To quote Hume, "...simple impressions always take the precedence of their correspondent ideas, but never appear in the contrary order." Therefore, where there are no impressions there can be no idea. Hume asserts, "A blind man can form no notion of colors; a deaf man of sounds." Here we are in agreement with James Orr who aptly quotes, "No philosopher was ever more peremptory or apriori than Hume in the application of this rule-of-thumb method of "no impression, no idea." It is not difficult to see how readily on this principle the mind may be despoiled of most of its richest possessions."

Hume explains the possibility of perceptual knowledge by introducing the concepts of memory and imagination. Later in this chapter we will show that mental activities such as memory and imagination are impossible without having a mind. Hume is of the opinion that when any impression has been present with the mind, it

23 Ibid., p. 12.
26 David Hume, 1975, p. 20.
again makes its appearance there as an idea. This it may do in two different ways. "...either when, in its new appearance, it retains a considerable degree of its vivacity, and is somewhat intermediate between an impression and an idea; or when it entirely loses that vivacity, and is a perfect idea. The faculty by which we repeat our impression in the first manner, is called memory, and the other imagination." 28 He continues, "when we remember any past event, the idea of it flows in upon the mind in a forcible manner; whereas in the imagination, the perception is faint and languid and cannot without difficulty, be preserved by the mind steady and uniform for any considerable time." 29

For Hume, the concept of imagination is indispensable that the whole burden of his theory of knowledge falls on it [and association of ideas – this concept will be critically analyzed in this chapter]. Besides, to a large extent memory itself depends upon imagination. Hume appreciates the concept of imagination as follows. "Nothing is more admirable than the readiness with which imagination suggests its ideas, and present them at the very instant in which they become necessary or useful." 30 Hume claims that the idea of memory finally degenerates 31 to such a degree as to be taken for an idea of imagination. Therefore it is imagination, which is to be given importance. While discussing memory and imagination, Hume shows that memory, sense experience and understanding are founded on imagination as the activities of our idea. R.W. Church rightly comments, "In the larger sense, imagination is the generic name for all the contents of consciousness." 32 We are in agreement with R.W Church. Because by including memory and imagination into his account of origin of knowledge, Hume makes it explicit the importance he attaches to such purely mental

29 Ibid., p. 18.
31 See part III, section V.
activities. We will further discuss the role of imagination in Hume's theory, when we analyze the concept of personal identity.

To make his claim stronger regarding origin of knowledge, Hume adds the concept of natural relation that can also be called as laws of association. Laws of association play a major role in Hume's theories. In fact, this along with imagination is singularly responsible for Hume's epistemology. We should mention B. M. Laing who criticizes Hume's concept of association of ideas and the consequent knowledge of the external world he derives from it. Laing criticizes, "Hume transforms the conception of association as principle of Human nature; and proceeds to argue that human nature enters as a determining factor into the knowledge which we have of the world. The unity and order, which characterize our known world, are ultimately due to a peculiarity of human nature. To make his system as complete as possible he endeavors to reconstruct the basis of logical theory and to show that the principles of association or of human nature lie also at the foundation of inference."33 We criticize Hume here, as his association is not logical principles; therefore neither human knowledge nor that world which we know is a logical system.

Hume says that when the mind passes from one simple impression to a simple idea, or from one idea to another idea, or from a number of simple impressions to a complex idea, it does so, not with the help of reason, but by certain principles, which associate together the ideas of these objects and unite them in imagination. "The principles of union among ideas, I have reduced to three general ones, and have asserted, that the idea or impression of any object naturally introduces the idea of any other object, that is resembling, contiguous to, or connected with it."34 Hume claims that there are mainly three principles of connection among ideas. "The qualities, from which this connection arises, and by which the mind is, after this manner, conveyed from one idea to another, are three, viz, resemblance, contiguity in time or place, and

34 David Hume, 1962, p. 139.
cause and effect." In his *Inquiries* Hume gives examples for resemblance, contiguity in time or place and cause and effect. They are the following, respectively: "A picture naturally leads our thoughts to the original: the mention of one apartment in a building naturally introduces an enquiry or discourse concerning the others: and if we think of a wound, we can scarcely forbear reflecting on the pain which follows it." Here it may be noted that Hume is consistently using material objects as examples to vindicate his theory, whose existence he denies.

It will be interesting to mention here that in spite of the importance Hume attaches to laws of association, he is not the first one to speak about it, in the history of Western philosophy. Before Hume, his predecessor John Locke dedicated one full chapter of his book, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (book II chapter XXXIII) to ‘association of ideas’. Surprisingly, Hume does not claim that he is the one who invented the concept of association of ideas. But he praises himself in his ‘Abstract’ as follows: “Thro’ this whole book’, he writes, ‘there are great pretensions to new discoveries in philosophy; but if anything can entitle the author to so glorious a name as that of an inventor’, tis the use he makes of the principle of association of ideas, which, enters into most of his philosophy.” Thus he claims to have discovered a new use for the association of ideas, which his predecessors were not aware of. We argue that this discovery is indispensable for Hume as the whole edifice of scientific knowledge is based on association of ideas.

37"Some of our ideas have a natural correspondence and connection one with another; it is the office and excellency of our reason to trace these, and hold them together into that union and correspondence which is founded in their peculiar beings. Besides this, there is another connection of ideas wholly owing to chance or custom; ideas that in themselves are not at all of kin, come to be so united in some men’s minds that it is very hard to separate them; they always keep in company, and the one no sooner comes into the understanding, but its associates appears with it; and if they are more than two which are thus united, the whole gang, always inseparable, show themselves together." P. 219.
38 An Abstract of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1740.
Hume compares laws of association with the laws of gravitation in physics. "Here is a kind of attraction, which the mental world will be found to have as extra ordinary effects as in the natural, and to show itself in as many and as various forms. Its effects are everywhere conspicuous; but as to its causes they are mostly unknown...Nothing is more requisite for a true philosopher, than to restrain the intemperate desire of searching into causes." 39 Here it is evident that on the one hand, he denies the possibility of knowledge by denying the necessary connections and thereby the whole gamut of scientific knowledge and on the other hand, he compares laws of association to the most important law of science, to law of gravitation. This seems to us as his method of validating his own position scientifically.

Besides, this comparison to Newtonian method does not look satisfactory to us. Because by comparing association to gravity, Hume suggests that just as Newton puts aside the search for the causes of attraction, so we must refuse to be led into any discussion of the causes of association. We are not supposed to ask why association operates as it does? But, we can describe how it works? (by means of resemblance, contiguity and cause and effect). There is, however, a vital difference between the two cases, which Hume fails to recognize. We may quote John Passmore who rightly points out this difference. "Attraction operates universally; therefore we cannot sensibly ask why it operates in a particular case. In contrast, association is only 'gentle force which commonly prevails'; we are not to conclude that 'without it the mind cannot join two ideas', since 'nothing is more free than that faculty' 40."

As this quote also suggests, there is a genuine problem, one which Hume does nothing whatever to solve; the problem is why association some times operates and some times fails to operate? Further more, sometimes contiguity operates, at other times

40 We may here mention what Hume says about 'that faculty' at another place. "Nothing is more free than the imagination of man; and though it cannot exceed that original stock of ideas furnished by the internal and external senses, it has unlimited power of mixing, compounding, separating, and dividing these ideas in all the varieties of fiction and vision." [See Inquiries, sec. V, part II].
resemblance; and one resembling idea, of the many possible resemblance's, exerts the predominant influence – these are facts which Hume leaves unexplained, and which must be explained if associationism is to be a science of mind. Hume leaves us with a science of mind that is quite incapable of explaining why our mind works in one way rather than in another. We agree with Passmore who appropriately says, "This is certainly not Newtonianism; Hume's science is a mere pretence; his associationism can explain whatever happens – since it is always possible to say that in this case the 'faculty' exerted its freedom – and this is the surest possible sign that it is not an explanation at all." 42

Another concept which Hume employs other than impressions, ideas, imagination and association of ideas as a basis for his theory of knowledge, is belief. We should mention here that his use of the term belief is different from the layman's use of it. For Hume, belief is a product of imagination. He interprets belief as, "When the mind therefore passes from the idea or impression of one object to the idea or belief of another, it is not determined by reason, but by certain principles, which associate together the ideas of these objects, and unite them in imagination." 43 Reflecting on the connection among impressions, association of ideas, imagination and belief, Edward Craig defends Hume's position as follows, "Hume has a psychological theory clearly modeled on Newton's mechanics of the physical world, consisting of the (supposed) natural laws governing the relationship between perceptions as input to the mind and belief as the output. 'The imagination' is his term for his operations of this natural 'mental mechanism'." 44 We have already discussed our objection to interpreting association of ideas as Newtonianism.

Hume speaks of belief as follows. First, as the idea of an object is an essential part of the belief in it, but not the whole. That is, the idea of existence is nothing different from the idea of any object [See part III sec. VII, 1961]. A belief is also

42 Ibid.
43 David Hume, 1962, p. 139.
defined by Hume as a lively idea related to or associated with a present impression. [Part III, sec. VI, 1962]. In his Inquiries Hume argues that there is difference between fiction and belief. This lies in some sentiment or feeling, which is attached to the latter and not to the former. This does not depend on the will, but arise from the particular situation in which the mind is placed at any particular juncture. “Whenever any object is presented to the memory or senses, it immediately, by the force of custom, carries the imagination to conceive that object, which is usually conjoined to it; and this conception is attended with a feeling or sentiment, different from the loose reveries of the fancy. In this consists the whole nature of belief.”

As a reply to Craig’s claim that belief is the product of imagination with perception as the input, we may quote Hume as, “I say, then, that belief is nothing but a more vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady conception of an object, than what imagination is ever able to attain.” Hume adds that belief is something felt by the mind, which distinguishes the ideas of the judgment from the fictions of the imagination. Belief gives them force and influence, makes them appear of greater importance and infixes them in the mind. Hume appeals that nothing is more evident than those ideas, to which we assent. They are more, strong, firm and vivid, than the loose reveries of a castle builder. “If one person sits down to read a book as a romance and another as a true history, they plainly receive the same ideas and in the same order; nor does the incredulity of the one, and the belief of the other, hinder them from putting the very same sense upon their author. His words produce the same ideas in both; though his testimony has not the same influence on them. The latter has a more lively conception of all the incidents. He enters deeper into the concerns of the persons; represents to himself their action, and characters, and friendships, and enmities: he even goes so far as to form a notion of their features, and air and person. While the former, who gives no credit to the testimony of the author, has a more faint and languid conception of all these particulars, and except on account of the style and ingenuity of the composition, can receive little entertainment from it.”

After analyzing Hume’s concept of belief

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45 David Hume, 1975, p.48.
46 Ibid., p. 49.
47 Hume, 1961, p. 100.
We criticize him as follows. He makes use of belief to expound the principles that play a part in building up and extending knowledge beyond impressions.

We stop here for a while to ask ‘why Hume tries to extend the jurisdiction of his epistemology by using not only impressions, but also ideas, the distinction between simple and complex impressions, memory, imagination, laws of association and belief?’ We criticize Hume here and answer the above question as follows. In order to explain the material world and the self he has to make use of all these concepts. And if he does not use these concepts and sticks only to impressions for the explanation of material world and self, it will lead to a position called solipsism. This is the view that ‘I and my ideas alone are real’. In philosophy, solipsism is connected with both ontology and epistemology.

To continue with our discussion of Hume’s theory of knowledge, as a result of association of ideas we have complex ideas as the subject of our thought. These are nothing but simple ideas associated by resemblance, contiguity and cause and effect. Hume divides complex ideas into three: Relations, Modes and Substances.

Hume claims that we use the word relation in two different senses. “Either for that quality by which two ideas are connected together in the imagination, and the one naturally introduces the other, after the manner above explained; or for that particular circumstance, in which, even upon the arbitrary union of two ideas in the fancy, we may think proper to compare them. In common language, the former is always the sense in which we use the word relation.”

Hume distinguishes seven general heads that are considered as the source of all philosophical relations. They are as follows:

- Resemblance: This is a relation without which no philosophical relation can exist, since no object will admit of comparison, but what have some degree of

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48 Ibid.
resemblance. But, though resemblance is necessary to all philosophical relations, it
does not follow that it always produces a connection or association of ideas.

Identity: This relation Hume considers as applying in the strict sense to
constant and unchangeable objects. [He keeps the explanation of the nature and basis
of personal identity for a later occasion]. Of all relations the most universal is that of
identity, being common to every being, whose existence has any duration.

Relations of space and time: This relation is the source of infinite number of
comparisons such as distant, contiguous, above, below, before, after, etc.

Proportion in quantity or number: All those objects, which admit of quantity or
number, may be compared in that particular, which is another very fertile source of
relation.

Degrees in any quality: When any two objects possess the same quality in
common, the degrees in which they possess it form the fifth species of relation.

Contrariety: This relation is regarded as an exception to the rule that, no
relation of any kind can subsist without some degree of resemblance. But, if we
consider that no two ideas are in themselves contrary, except those of existence and
non-existence, which are plainly resembling, as implying both of them an idea of the
object; though the latter excludes the object from all times and places, in which it is
supposed not to exist. Another example is the knowledge that black is not white.

Causation: All other objects, such as fire and water, heat and cold, are only
found to be contrary from experience, and from the contrariety of their causes or
effects. This relation of cause and effect is a seventh philosophical relation, as well as
natural one.49

49 David Hume, Part III, Sec. VI, 1962, p. 140.
The next two complex ideas are those of modes and substances. In our view, substance should be given preference. While discussing substance Hume tries to prove that we have no idea of substance except as a heap of singular qualities. He challenges those who believe in the existence of substance as follows. How do we know that there is a substance? In other words, whether the idea of substance is derived from impressions of sensations or from impressions of reflections? Since it is not derived from either of these, we have no idea of substance except as a collection of particular qualities. He asks, "If it is conveyed to us by our senses, I ask, which of them, and after what manner? If it be perceived by the eyes, it must be color; if by the ears, a sound; if by the palate, a taste; and so of other senses. But, I believe none will assert, that substance is either a color, or sound, or a taste. The idea of substance must, therefore, be derived from an impression of reflection, if it really exists. But, the impressions of reflection resolve themselves into our passions and emotions; none of which can possibly represent a substance. We have, therefore, no idea of substance, distinct from that of a collection of particular qualities, nor have we any other meaning when we either talk or reason concerning it."  

Hume considers modes also as the collection of simple ideas like substances. Therefore they are being treated alike by Hume but for minor differences. "The idea of a substance as well as that of a mode, is nothing but a collection of simple ideas, that are united by the imagination, and have a particular name assigned to them, by which we are able to recall, either to ourselves or others, that collection." The subtle difference between modes and substances is as follows. As we have seen, a substance for Hume is a collection of particular qualities. These particular qualities are referred to an unknown something, in which they are supposed to inhere. If this is not the case then at least they are supposed to be closely and inseparably connected by the relations of contiguity and causation. The advantage of latter part is that as and when a new simple quality is discovered of an object, we will be able to add this to the initial conception of the object. So much is the effect of

50 Ibid., p. 24.
51 Ibid.
52 Substratum of John Locke, as we have discussed in the introduction of the thesis.
the principle of union. In this context, Hume gives the example of gold. "Thus our
idea of gold may at first be a yellow color, weight, malleableness, fusibility; but upon
the discovery of its dissolubility in aqua regia, we join that to the other qualities, and
suppose it to belong to the substance as much as if its idea had from the beginning
made a part of a compound one."53

As we have seen earlier also, for the purpose of substantiating his position,
Hume assumes the existence material objects, like gold in this example.

In the case of modes, the simple ideas with which modes are formed, either
represent qualities, which are not united by contiguity and causation and are dispersed
in various subjects; or incase they are all united together, the uniting principle is not
considered as the foundation of the complex idea. Hume gives the example of dance
for the first kind of modes, and that of beauty for the second kind. Now it is evident
that such complex ideas cannot receive or incorporate any new idea, without changing
the name, which distinguishes the mode.

Concept of substance is an important one in philosophy. Hume denies this
concept since it cannot be given to us in sense experience or in the form of
impressions. We criticize this position of Hume. To avoid repetition we add it along
with our analysis of Hume's concept of self and personal identity.

In part III, sec. I of A Treatise of Human Nature, Hume discusses knowledge
and probability. Here he divides the seven philosophical relations under two heads –
those that depend entirely on ideas and those that may be changed without any change
in the ideas. There are four relations that depend entirely on ideas. They are
resemblance, degrees in quality, proportion in quantity or number and contrariety.
Rest three relations may be changed without any change in the ideas; they are identity,
relations of space and time and causation.

53 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
So far we have been analyzing origin of knowledge as Hume interprets it. Now let us analyze Hume’s views on nature of knowledge.

In the *Inquiries* sec. IV, part I, Hume divides knowable propositions into two: Relations of ideas and Matters of fact. This division, which has come to be known as ‘Hume’s fork’, is fundamental both to Hume’s empiricism and to the 20th century empiricism that it inspired. It runs as follows, “All the objects of human reason or enquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds, to wit, *Relations of ideas*, and *Matters of fact*. Of the first kind are the sciences of geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic; and in short every affirmation which is intuitively or demonstratively certain. *That the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the square of the two sides*, is a proposition which expresses a relation between these figures. *That three times five is equal to the half of thirty*, expresses a relation between these numbers. 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 ever retain their certainty and evidence.”

“Matters of fact, which are the second objects of human reason, are not ascertained in the same manner; nor is our evidence of their truth, however great, of a like nature with the forgoing. The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible; because it can never imply a contradiction, and is conceived by the mind with the same faculty and distinctness, as if ever so conformable to reality. *That the sun will not rise tomorrow* is no less intelligible a proposition, and implies no more contradiction, than the affirmation, *that it will rise*. We should in vain, therefore, attempt to demonstrate its falsehood, were it demonstratively false, it would imply a contradiction, and could never be distinctively conceived by the mind.”

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54 David Hume, 1975, p. 25.
We find that Hume treats knowledge of Relations of ideas as universal and necessary. Because universal means it is without any exception and necessary means its contradiction is impossible. Evidently relations of ideas are derived apriori - prior to experience. Therefore this kind of knowledge is subsumed under formal logic that is deductive in nature. Knowledge of matters of fact, Hume attributes to our sensual faculty. The striking example of this kind of knowledge is that of cause and effect. Cause and effect relationship ultimately depends on experience. Hume's epistemology suggests that matters of fact are inductive knowledge that is derived from a number of singular instances, from impressions and ideas. This also implies that this knowledge is aposteriori - it is only probable, not certain. Hume exemplifies this in the context of cause and effect. So far we have the effect of burning from the cause, fire. But he argues that none of us can say with all certainty that we will not get any sensation other than burning such as cooling, itching etc. from fire in future.

We are of the opinion that here Hume wishes to establish the distinction between the nature of apriori and aposteriori knowledge on the one hand and on the other, the extension of latter to include high or low degree of probability.

In part III, section XI of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume speaks about what he means by probability. This is the result of his desire to explain from the same principles some other species of reasoning which are derived from the same origin [association of ideas to present impressions]. He identifies three kinds of human reasons that contribute to our comprehension. These are from knowledge, from proofs and from probabilities.

"By knowledge, I mean the assurance arising from the comparison of ideas. By proofs those arguments which are derived from the relation of cause and effect and which are entirely free from doubt and uncertainty. By probability, that evidence which is still attended with certainty." 55

55 David Hume, 1962, pp.174 -175.
The idea of cause and effect derived from experience presents us with certain objects, which are constantly conjoined with each other. This produces in us a habit of observing them in that relation only. We cannot, by habit, observe them in any other relation [for instance, fire causing cooling effect]. On the other hand, chance is nothing real in itself, it is merely a negation of a cause, and its influence on our mind is contrary to that of causation. Furthermore, it is indispensable for chance to leave the imagination completely indifferent, either to consider the existence or non-existence of that object which is regarded as contingent. Hume writes, "A cause traces the way to our thought, and in a manner forces us to survey such certain objects in such certain relations. Chance can only destroy this determination of thought, and leave the mind in its native situation of indifference; in which, upon the absence of a cause, it is instantly reinstated."56 This is how Hume attempts to extend the boundary of a posteriori knowledge to high and low degree of probability. Evidently, causes are of high probability and chances are of low probability.

We can see that Hume traces all reasoning concerning matters of fact to ultimately rest on the concept of custom. Martin Hollis aptly concludes custom here means nothing but association of ideas. Interpreting Hume, Hollis writes, "Ideas are prompted in us by impressions or simple experiences. Frequent impressions give rise to concepts, and regular conjunctions of impressions lead us to associate ideas, thus producing a conceptual scheme, which reflects the world as we find it, provided that we attempt to experience. The crucial relation in the forming of concepts is 'resemblance': we simply recognize that two red patches resemble one another in both being red. The edifice of knowledge thus depends on regularities in nature obtruding themselves on the mind."57

56 Ibid., p. 175.
Hume writes explicitly that all our reasoning concerning matters of fact are founded on a species of analogy. Analogy leads us to expect from any cause the same events, which we have observed to result from some causes. When the causes are similar analogy is perfect and the inference drawn from it is certain and conclusive. To quote Hume’s example, “Nor does any man ever entertain a doubt, where he sees a piece of iron, that it will have weight and cohesion of parts; as in all other instances, which have ever fallen under his observation.”

Coming back to Hume’s fork again, it is this distinction of knowable propositions is what makes Hume a true precursor of modern empiricism. By offering a criterion for analytic truths as well as for meaning, Hume inspired the 20th century empiricism immensely. Modern empiricism renamed Hume’s relations of ideas and matters of fact as analytic and synthetic statements. Farhang Zabeeh aptly writes, “The belief of modern empiricism in some fundamental cleavage between truths which are analytic or grounded in meaning independently of matters of fact, and truths which are synthetic or grounded in fact, was foreshadowed in Hume’s distinction drawn in the Treatise between relations which are invariable, depending solely upon ideas, and relations which may be changed without any change in ideas; and a simpler distinction made in the Inquiries between Relations of ideas and matters of fact.”

Modern empiricists are of the opinion that analytic statements derive their meaningfulness from the definition of their words. To say that, a circle is round or a bachelor is an unmarried man has significance because the word circle implies roundness as also the word bachelor, an unmarried man. Mostly analytic statements do not increase our knowledge. Their meaning does not depend upon experience. They are necessarily true because of the meaning of their terms. They are tautologies. Unlike analytic statements, synthetic statements may be either true or false. Their truth or falsity can be discovered only by reference to non-linguistic data, i.e. to facts.

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58 David Hume, 1975, p. 104.
For example, the statement, ‘all bachelors are carefree’. Thus whether all bachelors are unmarried depends on what ‘bachelor’ means; whether bachelors are carefree, depends on how flesh-and-blood bachelors respond to life.

Logical positivists say that one must never confuse words with things, for instance, by thinking it a fact of the world that all bachelors are unmarried. Because the argument that all flesh-and-blood bachelors are unmarried, is not a fact of the world. Logical positivists reply that this ‘fact’ springs solely from a convention of language. ‘All bachelors are unmarried’ projects our intention to use the word ‘bachelor’ as we do. It is true by convention, for logical positivists. There is scope of altering the convention, but so far it holds married persons are not to be counted as bachelors; whereas bachelors are bachelors, whether they are carefree or not. Martin Hollis appropriately comments, “The same goes true for all truths of logic, mathematics and other formal systems. They result from rules, which we have constructed and thus depend solely on human decisions. We may seem to find them amply confirmed by experience but this is only because we never allow experience to refute them. Any one who claimed to find a circle whose circumference was not equal to its diameter $2\pi r$ would thereby be misapplying the term ‘circle’; hence it is a matter of convention, not of experience, that circles have this property.”

Leading 20th century philosopher A. J. Ayer argues, “Analytic judgments add nothing through the predicate to the concept of subject, but merely break it up into those constituent concepts that have all along been thought in it, although confusedly.” Synthetic judgments on the other hand, “add to the concept of the subject a predicate which has not been in any wise thought in it, and which no analysis could possibly extract from it.” Evidently Ayer is very much inspired by Hume’s fork. He declares that any knowledge other than analytic and synthetic statements does not have any

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60 The above explanation.

61 Circumference of a circle=$2\pi r$; $r$ = radius of a circle and $2r$ = diameter of a circle (d).

62 Martin Hollis, 2000, p.52.

meaning. In the first chapter of his book, 'Language, Truth and Logic', while discussing principle of verification, Ayer considers analytic propositions as tautology and synthetic propositions as empirical hypothesis. He asserts that the whole class of significant propositions is either tautology or empirical hypothesis. Any propositions other than these two are metaphysical and consequently, nonsensical. We argue that this opinion of Ayer is the direct effect of the concluding part of Hume’s Inquiries, which reads as follows, “If”, he writes, “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 of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to flames. For it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.”

That is, Hume relegates any knowledge other than relations of ideas and matters of fact. Metaphysics and theology, for Hume, being subjects, which fall under neither the experimental sciences nor mathematical sciences, are worthless ones. Surprisingly for Hume, philosophy is not identical with metaphysics and hence it does not seem that he wants to commit his own books to flames. The statement needs some qualification, and that is as follows.

Hume claims that his work, 'A Treatise of Human Nature' is “an Attempt to introduce the experimental method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects”, as the subtitle of the book shows. Also at the end of ‘An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals’, he distinguishes between his own method of philosophical investigation and metaphysical speculation truly so called. He maintains that his own philosophical inquiry into principles of morals is in fact nothing but scientific investigation, whereas the hypotheses of his opponents, being abstruse and unintelligible, in reality, are

64 Ayer writes, “We may accordingly define a metaphysical sentence as a sentence which purports to express a genuine proposition, but does, in fact, express neither a tautology nor an empirical hypothesis. And as tautologies and empirical hypotheses form the entire class of significant propositions, we are justified in concluding that all metaphysical assertions are nonsensical.”[ibid., p. 41.]
65 David Hume, 1975, p. 165.
nothing more than metaphysical speculation. To quote Hume, "All this is metaphysics, you cry. That is enough; there needs nothing more to give a strong presumption of falsehood. Yes, reply, I, here are metaphysics surely; but they are all on your side, who advance an abstruse hypothesis, which can never be made intelligible, nor quadrate with any particular instance or illustration. The hypothesis, which we embrace, is plain. It maintains that morality is determined by sentiment. ... We then proceed to examine a plain matter of fact, to wit, what actions have this influence. We consider all the circumstances in which these actions agree, and hence endeavour to extract some general observations with regard to these sentiments. If you call this metaphysics, and find anything abstruse here, you need only conclude that your turn of mind is not suited to the moral sciences." 66

II. Ontology

We are of the view that since epistemology and ontology are inseparable, the discussion of one invariably leads to the discussion of other also. We have already analyzed Hume’s epistemology. In this section, we will be discussing Hume’s ontological position. Here we will be critically analyzing how Hume explains the subject of knowledge or self. We also hold the view that the three components of knowledge – the subject, the object and the source – are so closely interrelated that the explanation of one brings in the explanation of other two as well. Therefore, we will show in the course of this chapter that the denial of any one of the three components of knowledge results in the denial of knowledge itself.

We have seen that Hume has sensations as the source of knowledge and impressions and ideas as the objects of knowledge. But, for him, there is no subject of knowledge as there is no impression corresponding to this. In other words, human self cannot be given in sense experience. There is no impression corresponding to self. Therefore no idea of self consequently Hume denies its existence. But, we argue that

66 Ibid., p. 289.
there can be no knowledge without a knowing subject or self in Hume’s words. To respond to this requirement Hume attempts to solve the difficulty as follows. Since sensations are the source of knowledge, there cannot exist a continuing self, because we do not have any proof for a simple and continuing entity in us. In Hume’s view, ‘self or person’ is not one impression to which our different impressions and ideas are supposed to have a reference. What we call self is a collection of all our different experiences. He argues that different experience such as pain, pleasure, love, hatred etc. are transitory. They never remain the same, if at all the self has to be identified after one of them. Now, Hume reframes his conclusion as we do not have impressions of an enduring self.

Hume’s analysis of self-reveals that self is equivalent to a collection of various perceptions. Hume says, “For my part, 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 any thing but the perception.” He further says, “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.”

Hume thinks that the comparison of theatre should not mislead one. Because every distinct perception is a distinct existence and is separable from every other. Hume sums up selves or human beings as follows: “…they are 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.” Here we comment that from Hume’s above account, the denial of self does not necessarily implies denial of

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67 A Treatise of Human Nature, part IV, section VI.
68 David Hume, 1961, p. 239.
69 Ibid. pp. 239-240.
70 Ibid., p. 239.
subject. This is so, because self is enduring and subject momentary\textsuperscript{71} and Hume denies an enduring self.

While agreeing with Hume, A.D.P. Kalansuriya feels that Hume should have compared mind to ‘rain’, rather than to a theatre where different perceptions appear and disappear. Before it rains, we would not think where it existed and what it was doing. If it were in the cloud, then we call it cloud and not rain. Mind is a label for a bundle of internal sense perceptions. Perhaps, Kalansuriya feels, Hume wants to say the following. There does not exist a mind in addition to the collection of my internal sense experience; i.e., when I explain my internal sense experiences, I explain my mind also.\textsuperscript{72} We are of the view that here Kalansuriya is making a semantic distinction and on the basis of that existential distinction also.\textsuperscript{73} We criticize that Kalansuriya’s view is pluralistic, because for him every word has a corresponding object.

Denial of an enduring self demands an explanation of the concept of ‘personal identity’ from Hume. As we have seen, Hume tries to construct self out of perceptions, and for Hume, perceptions are nothing but impressions of reflections. Here we can see that Hume is trying to use impressions and perceptions as synonymous concepts.\textsuperscript{74}

If only transitory impressions or perceptions constitute the self, as Hume advocates, then why do people believe in an enduring self? Hume faces this problem by claiming that there is no entity corresponding to an enduring self as people believe, instead there are only different perceptions, which are connected together by certain ‘association’. Hume explains the continuance of different objects and human self through similarity, and not through sameness or identity. Hume finds a great analogy

\textsuperscript{71} This issue we will further discuss in our next chapter.
\textsuperscript{72} From the discussions with Professor A.D.P. Kalansuirya, Department of Philosophy, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.
\textsuperscript{73} Reference is to Frege’s theory. He holds that semantic distinction cannot mean existential distinction.
\textsuperscript{74} David Hume, 1962, p.241.
between the identity of plants and animals and the identity of self or person. He argues, "...in a very few years both vegetables and animals endure a total change, yet we still attribute identity to them, while their form, size, and substance are entirely altered. An oak that grows from a small plant to a large tree is still the same oak, though there be not one particle of matter or figure of its parts the same. An infant becomes a man, and is sometimes fat, sometimes lean, without any change in his identity." Basing his concept on these arguments, Hume negates sameness or identity.

He tries to make the point that though the constituent parts undergo constant changes, we mistakenly attribute identity to the composite object. In such cases, we overlook the changes because of the following factors. The change may be very small to the whole, e.g., if the change is not noticed; the change may be gradual, as in the case of plants and animals, which evades our attention; or the changes may not hamper the function of the whole or may be taken as natural. To quote Hume, "...supposing some very small or inconsiderable part to be added to the mass, or subtracted from it; though this absolutely destroys the identity of the whole, strictly speaking, yet as we seldom think so accurately...where we find so trivial an alteration. The passage of the thought from the object before the change to the object after it, is so smooth and easy, that we scarce perceive the transition, and are apt to imagine, that it is nothing but a continued survey of the same object...The addition and diminution of a mountain would not be sufficient to produce a diversity in a planet; though the change of a very few inches would be able to destroy the identity of some bodies...A change in any considerable part of a body destroys its identity; but it is remarkable, that where the change is produced gradually and insensibly, we are less apt to ascribe to it the same effect."
We are of the view that all these points instead of proving Hume’s point prove just the opposite, viz, that a composite thing can remain identical through perpetual changes. In this context, let us quote Terence Penelhum who rightly says, “There is no contradiction in saying that certain kinds of things are composed of a succession of parts, and yet are each only one thing...Hume’s fundamental error is his assertion that the idea of identity is the idea of an object that persists without changing.”

It seems to us that change always occurs in a framework that is in a substance that is persisting. Hume denies identity because he denies a continuing substance – both mental and material. Substance is an important concept in philosophy. The substance theory, which can be traced back at least to Aristotle and which was upheld by most medieval thinkers and by the Rationalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is essentially an attempt to answer the philosophical question, ‘what is a thing?’ There are two competing answers for this question: the bundle theory and the substance theory. As we have seen, bundle theory is favoured by Hume (and also by Russell in his phenomenalism) among others. It says that a thing is nothing but a collection of coexisting properties. For instance, a tomato is nothing but roundness, redness, squashiness, and so on, existing together at a certain place and time. Substance theory says that a thing is composed of more than its properties; it has in addition, an underlying substance to which all the properties belong to or ‘inhire’. For instance, the white color of snow.

As we have seen in the introduction, on the standard seventeenth and eighteenth century views stemming largely from Descartes, there are two different kinds of substances. One is material substance or matter having the basic properties of shape, size and solidity. Second is mental substance or mind having the singular property of conscious states. This substance dualism (Cartesian dualism) also holds that a person is identified with his or her mind or mental substance.

78 Terence Penelhum, “Hume on Personal Identity”, The Philosophical Review, L XIV (1); 1955; 226-
The principal rational for the substance theory is provided by what is called the 'argument from change'. For instance, the subject of any change between a pair of opposites, such as the material without which heat cannot itself change into cold. This view implies that substance is the underlying framework that persists through all qualitative changes. And this view can be accepted only if we accept internal relations, where different processes are interconnected and interdependent. We argue that Hume's belief in external relations, leads to the pluralistic view of reality. That is reality treated as discrete, un-connected units. That is why, for Hume material substance is a bundle of impressions, and mental substance is a bundle of perceptions. Because all that we know and consequently can exist are impressions and / or perceptions taken in abstractions only.

H. H. Price considers Hume's empiricist's principle as misleading, because on the one hand, Hume says ideas are derived from impressions and on the other, he claims that ideas are mental images. It may be noted here that the empiricist principle is not really concerned with images, but with our consciousness of universals. To quote Price, "empiricist principle reveals every universal which we are aware of, has either been directly abstracted from sense given or introspectively given instances, or can be wholly defined in terms of universals thus abstracted."\(^{79}\) We can see that here Price is agreeing with Hume, in saying that universals are essences and particulars are appearances. But, both Hume and Price abstract universals from particulars. We argue that any thing that is found in the objective reality is a combination of universals and particulars. To be precise, universals exist only in the particulars and essences exist only in the appearances. We are of the view that separating universals from particulars and essences from appearances cannot give us complete knowledge.

Hume maintains that the concept of personal identity is a fiction. He writes, "The identity which we ascribe to the mind of man is only a fictitious one, and of a

\(^{246}\)

like kind with that which we ascribe to vegetables and animal bodies. It cannot therefore have a different origin, but must proceed from a like operation of the imagination upon like objects."\(^{80}\) But we ask, if self's identity is a fictitious one as Hume interprets it, then why we think that there is identity? The possible answer is, because Hume regards the constituents of the self which are transitory, unconnected perceptions as similar; and also for him self does not denote it as one identical entity. He explains what he regards as people's belief in an identical self by connecting different perceptions, which constitute the self through laws of association. Anjali Purohit Mahadeshwar appropriately comments on Hume: "The reason for our fallacious belief in identity, for Hume, are three – namely resemblance, contiguity and causality. The definition, which Hume accords to identity is 'invariable, uninterrupted existence' and since, none of our sense perceptions about objects or beings can conform to his definition, or assumption that there is such identity in nature is not justified and hence our notion of identity is a fiction."\(^{81}\)

We criticize Hume that since the unity and continuity attributed to individual human beings are in fact as far from fictitious as could be, Hume is quite unable to offer any account of how we come to make supposedly false attribution without that account persistently presupposing that, that attribution is after all true. As if compelled by the truth he refers in his every statement either to 'we' or to the 'mind' or to the imagination as reviewing or reflecting upon those successive perceptions of which such supposedly non-substantial subjects are supposed to consist. Thus he infers, both from his more particular recent conclusions and from his general principles, "...that identity is nothing really belonging to these different perceptions, and uniting them together, but is merely a quality, which we attribute to them, because of the union of their ideas in the imagination when we reflect upon them."\(^{82}\)

\(^{80}\) David Hume, 1962, p. 308.

\(^{81}\) Aanjali Purohit Mahadeshwar, Title of the thesis: The Concept of Change, (Un-published work, submitted to Bombay University, 1992), p. 84.

\(^{82}\) David Hume, 1962, p. 309.
At last the question which worries Hume is, the identity of other people, rather than of ourselves: "The only question, therefore, which remains is, by what relations this uninterrupted progress of our thought is produced, when we consider the successive existence of a mind or thinking person."\(^{83}\) Now, it is evident that for Hume the paramount question is more scientific than philosophical. It is neither 'what does it mean to say “same person”'? Nor ‘what are the criteria for determining, whether ‘this at time one’ is the same person as ‘that at time two’?’ but, rather ‘what are the psychological mechanisms which some times mislead us to attribute what is always in fact a fictitious identity to successive bundles or collections of perceptions?'

Hume projects two relations as responsible for the ‘uninterrupted progress of our thought’- resemblance and causation. He believes that an image necessarily resembles its object and frequent placing of these resembling perceptions in the chain of thought, convey the imagination more easily from one link to another, and make the whole seem like the continuance of one object. This is in fact done by memory for it is the faculty, by which we raise up the images of past perceptions [we have already explained the concept of memory in this chapter]. In Hume’s words, “In this particular, then, memory not only discovers the identity, but also contributes to its production, by producing the relation of resemblance among perceptions. The case is the same, whether we consider ourselves or others."\(^{84}\) We argue here that Hume failed to make the obvious distinction that consciousness of personal identity; cannot constitute personal identity.

The second important relation constituting the ‘uninterrupted progress’ is causation. "We may observe that the true idea of human mind, is to consider it as a system of different perceptions or different existence, which are linked together by the relation of cause and effect, and mutually produce, destroy, influence and modify each other." \(^{85}\) Now we can see that Hume is making use of the concept of causation to

\(^{83}\) Ibid., pp. 309-310.

\(^{84}\) Ibid., p. 310.

\(^{85}\) Ibid.
explain personal identity. So far we have seen that Hume is denying personal identity. Now through his interpretation of causation he is trying to explain people's belief in (false) identity, which is not there in reality. He denies necessary causal connections and his concept of causation is only that of 'before and after'.

In this context, he compares soul to a republic or commonwealth. He writes, "In this context, I cannot compare the soul more properly to anything than to a republic or commonwealth, in which the several members are united by reciprocal ties of the government and subordination, and give rise to other persons who propagate the same republic in the incessant changes of its parts. And as the same individual republic may not only change its members, but also its laws and constitutions; in like manner the same person may vary his character and disposition, as well as his impressions and ideas, without losing his identity. Whatever changes he endures, his several parts are still connected by the relation of causation."86

Here Hume means to say that just as in a republic in which different members with different ideas are connected by one entity viz., government, different discrete and unconnected 'impressions' and 'ideas' are connected together by the laws of association and memory, to constitute the self, but not an enduring one. [This issue whether self can be constructed out of impressions and ideas or not will be discussed in the following paragraphs.] In this context, it is pertinent to quote A.H. Bassen, who says Hume is interested in, "perceiving mind and notions in the mind, which supposedly govern the movement of the body. But he equates personal identity with the identity of such perceiving mind and defines it without reference to body or enduring spiritual substance."87

How does Hume construct the self? We find that he does this in the same way in which he constructs the material objects. That is, by connecting transitory and discrete impressions on the basis of laws of association.

86 Ibid., pp. 310-311.
But when we analyze the self, we find that the nature of self is very different in a special sense from the nature of material objects. Whereas material objects can be constructed realistically within the framework of Hume, he cannot ignore subjectivity, while constructing and interpreting the self. We argue that this subjectivity cannot be explained only with the aid of laws of association. Therefore in order to explain subjectivity of self, Hume brings in two more concepts, viz. memory and imagination. We find that by introducing memory besides laws of association, Hume expects the subjectivity to bear all human knowledge. George Novack also feels, “Hume shifted the whole weight of knowledge on the subjective side. However, the solitary self is too weak to sustain so great a burden. Actually if Hume’s contentions were true, the entire structure of human knowledge collapses for the lack of support of objective reality.”

After studying Hume’s explanation of self through the concepts of memory and imagination, we criticize Hume as follows. Hume’s idea of personal identity has no objective significance in its ontological framework.

One such context is the following. “It is still true that every distinct perception which enters into the composition of the mind is a distinct existence, and is different and distinguishable, and separable from every other perception, either contemporary or successive.” Hume is of the view that commonsense belief ignores this distinction and separability of perception and tries to unite them by identity. But, we ask, for Hume whether this identity really binds our several perceptions together or only associates its ideas in the imagination? Hume attempts to explain the identical self through the laws of association, because for him, understanding never observes any real connection among various perceptions which constitute the self and even the most important concept of cause and effect, in his view is nothing but customary association of ideas. Therefore Hume claims that identity is nothing really belonging to general

89 David Hume, 1962, pp. 308-309.
perceptions, but only a quality, which we attribute to them. This way Hume reaches the conclusion that it is on the three association of ideas that identity depends along with memory, belief and imagination.

Now we will continue with the importance, the concept of memory has, in Hume’s interpretation of self. We have seen that Hume incorporates memory to account for the subjectivity of the self along with three laws of association. According to Anjali Purohit Mahadeshwar, in this way Hume even creates the self. She is of the opinion, “A chief additional contributory factor to the concept of personal identity is however, the existence of memory which seems to link together past perceptions in a way as to lead us to believe in self or person who has such a succession of perceptions, thus leading us also to believe that memory not only discovers the identity, but also contributes to its production, by producing the relation of resemblance among perceptions.”

Hume believes that memory, which helps us to see the resemblance and causation is a very important concept. He is of the opinion that if we had no memory, causation would not have occurred to us. Then the series of causes and effects, which constitute the person or self, would have been an impossibility. Besides, for him one self is different from another because of memory. He even brings in memory as a criterion of identity; only ‘I’ can remember my ‘impressions’ and ‘ideas’; ‘I’ cannot have the impressions and ideas and therefore memory of others. In other words, to Hume, only ‘I’ can remember what happened to me say, for ten years ago? Hume is holding the other alternative also; can we with all precision remember exactly what happened in our childhood? But he argues that this is not a sufficient reason to deny the present self as not the same as the past one. Hume explains, “For how few of our past actions are there, of which we have any memory? Who can tell me for instance what were his thoughts and actions on the first of January 1715, ...Or will he affirm, because he has entirely forgot the incidents of these days, that present self is not the

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90 Anjali Purohit Mahadeshwar, 1992, p. 83.
same person with the self of that time; and by that means overturn all the most established notions of personal identity? In this view memory does not so much produce as discover personal identity, by showing us the relation of cause and effect among our different perceptions. It will be incumbent on those who affirm that memory produces entirely our personal identity, to give a reason why we can thus extend our identity beyond our memory.”

Twentieth century empiricists though accept on the whole the ontological and epistemological assumptions of Hume, also find it difficult to reduce the self to mere impressions and ideas. Leading twentieth century empiricist A.J. Ayer who is an ardent follower of Hume tries to solve the problem of personal identity by bringing in an intermediary, body. Unlike Hume, instead of going directly from impressions to constitute the self, Ayer proceeds from impressions through bodily impressions besides laws of association. Ayer writes, “For we have solved Hume’s problem by defining personal identity in terms of bodily identity, and bodily identity is to be defined in terms of the resemblance and continuity of sense-contents.” We see that Ayer’s sense contents are equivalent to Hume’s impressions.

We argue that personal identity cannot be explained through perceptions alone. It is possible only with reference to a body without reducing it to any thing else. Hume does not make personal identity dependent on body, consequently Hume’s various methods of identity through memory, imagination and causation fail in their objectives. We are of the view that in fact for identity, spatio-temporal continuity is to be granted, and this Hume denies. Besides he repudiates the distinction between mind and body by explaining these in terms of ‘collection’ of discrete and un-connected impressions and thus makes it difficult to raise the identity question. P. F. Strawson

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91 David Hume, 1962, p. 311.
rightly stresses the role of body that plays an indispensable role in forming the concept of a person and views that, it is through body that we become aware of other persons. "Hume was seeking or ironically pretending to seek the ego substance and did not find any thing, when he looked into himself, any thing but perceptions." 93

At last Hume himself finds it difficult to explain identity within the framework of impressions, ideas, memory, imagination and laws of association. Therefore he declares the whole issue as merely verbal and thereby supplies food for thought to later linguistic philosophers like Bertrand Russell. Hume concludes, "...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. Identity depends on relations of ideas; and these relations produce identity, by means of that easy transition they occasion. But as these relations and the easiness of the transaction may diminish by insensible degrees we have no just standard by which we can decide any dispute concerning the time when they acquire or lose a title to the name of identity. All the disputes concerning the identity of connected objects are merely verbal, except so far as the relation of parts give rise to some fiction or imaginary principle of union, as we have already observed." 94

We should make note of the contrast here, which says 'grammatical' rather than philosophical. It, indeed, is a 'grammatical' question whether a building is 'still the same' after extensive renovations have been made to it; but we cannot forgo the central issues in the controversy about personal identity so easily, for we have to remember Hume's words, "...the controversy concerning identity is not merely a dispute of words." 95 We can see that Hume is not right in attributing the issue of personal identity the status of a grammatical than a philosophical problem also because he himself expressed this opinion that it is the usual business of philosophers to tresspass into other fields for convenience. If one is criticizing others regarding a

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94 David Hume, 1962, pp. 311-312.
95 Ibid., p.304.
particular ground he himself should not commit the same folly; but this is precisely what Hume has done. In Appendix IV of the *Inquiries Concerning Principles of Morals*, Hume criticizes, "Nothing is more usual than for philosophers to encroach upon the province of grammarians; and to engage in disputes of words, while they imagine that they are handling controversies of the deepest importance and concern."96

This way we see that Hume *himself* could not manage the idea of personal identity. He happens to come to the conclusion that personal identity cannot be explained through perceptions alone as he puts it in the Appendix of the *Treatise*. "But upon a more strict review of the section concerning personal identity, I find myself involved in such a labyrinth that, I must confess, I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent...Most philosophers seem inclined to think, that personal identity arises from consciousness, and consciousness is nothing but a reflected thought or perception. The present philosophy therefore has so far a promising aspect. But all my hopes vanish when I come to explain the principles that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness. I cannot discover any theory which gives me satisfaction on this head."97 We argue that it is because of this reason that personal identity does not find a place in Hume's later work.

We are of the view that self comes into existence first and then impressions and ideas because only if there is a self, our experiences can be registered and not the way Hume argued that impressions and ideas constitute the self. We also oppose the view that since one can remember one's past experiences, one should believe in the concept of personal identity.

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96 David Hume, 1975, p. 312.
97 See Appendix to *A Treatise of Human Nature*, pp. 328-331.
III. Concluding remarks

In this chapter we have critically analyzed the epistemological and ontological interpretations of David Hume. Interpretation by any philosopher means that there is a particular worldview according to which that particular philosopher interprets the world; and a particular worldview implies a particular methodology. We argue that Hume’s methodology is metaphysical. It consists in, “abstracting from the concrete totality an aspect of objective reality and absolutizing it.”

A methodology includes logic and the logic for Hume is the doctrine of external relations. It speaks of a relation independent of its terms. Consequently, Hume’s relations are distinct, unconnected, and independent and do not need the support of any thing else to exist. Hume’s belief in external relations leads to the atomistic view of things – which is otherwise known as pluralism. Pluralism is the view that reality consists of more than two entities. For Hume, it is innumerable number of independent impressions or perceptions that constitute reality. Therefore we have come to the conclusion that Hume’s ontological position is pluralism. His ontological position can also be designated as psychological atomism, since Hume’s impressions are subjective, mental, transitory units out of which the whole world – mental and material- is constructed. And because of this reason he denies both these realities, as also are composed of units of impressions, which are separate, loose, non-continuous and fleeting. As substances, also they cannot be given in experience therefore they do not exist. We have experience only of impressions and ideas. We are in complete agreement with Suman Gupta, who criticizes Hume in the following way, “…by experience Hume meant just having impressions and ideas without being

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neither a self who has the impressions nor the material substance, which causes these impressions."\textsuperscript{99}

We see the greatest objection that can be raised against Hume is that he tries to assert every thing that he denies. The concepts of mind and physical objects are two important ones, in our every day life, which he denies throughout his theories. But, as we have seen he uses these two concepts wherever necessary to prove his points. While claiming that he needs only impressions and ideas, Hume repeatedly allows himself the use of the term mind. He constantly assumes mind as the abode of impressions. He continually and in so many words takes its existence and operations for granted; endows it with faculties; (what else the concepts memory and imagination imply?) furnishes it with ‘original principles’; ascribes to it powers of comparison and reasoning; concedes to it ideas of ‘relation’; these association of ideas and custom he projects as permanent factors of our experiences. He makes use of association of ideas at times as original principles of the ‘mind’ or of ‘human nature’; and at other times they work as ‘powers of attraction’ between impressions and ideas themselves. We ask, how attraction is possible between two impressions and/or ideas which in Burne’s terminology are entirely separate and are in ‘perpetual flux and movement?’ Under the garb of pronouns ‘I’ and ‘we’, Hume makes unlimited instances of the activities of mind.

Again, if we ask how does Hume know his ‘ideas’ as the faint copies of previous impressions as he claims? We are of the view that to make a comparison at the some point of time even for a fraction of a second, the two must have been together in our consciousness. But, Hume claims that the impression vanishes before the idea comes to the scene. This means that when the comparison is made, there is nothing present except the assumed copy. The question is, ‘what then render the knowledge of its resemblance to the impression?’, or ‘what makes the comparison between them?’

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
If he were to argue that memory retains the image of the past impression, it is only to repeat that feeble idea is present, which is mysteriously unknown, we take it to be a copy of the formal lively idea. The concept of memory also faces the same problem. Hume’s account is that memory differs from imagination not only in the livelier character of its ideas but also in the fact that it is ‘tied down’ to the same ‘order and form’ as the original impression is not adequate. James Orr aptly criticizes, “In memory an image is not only given, but is recognized as the image of a past event or experience. It is connected with an idea of past time, and is accompanied by belief in the fidelity of the representation.” Simultaneously we are left with the burden of how to become aware of that image in memory, which represents the ‘order and form’ of a past experience? Belief for Hume is simply a lively idea related to or associated with a present impression.

We argue that mere liveliness of an idea is definitely no guarantee that it is a perfect copy of the past – now vanished – impression. Also there is no solution existing for Hume’s principle. The only solution appears to us to recall in memory in a persisting self (which Hume ignores). Because the self, which is one and the same throughout, knows the acts, which it imagines to itself as its own acts. This also implies that memory in no case should be treated as a mere reproduction of a sense impression.

This way we find that Hume’s whole intention of interpreting the origin and nature of human knowledge is turned out to be a difficult task, because of the positions he assumed. Instead of solving the problems of philosophy, he adds up to the existing difficulties. The question is, is construction of knowledge a possibility without a conscious thinking principle to unite, combine and corroborate different parts of the knowledge?

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100 James Orr, 1990, p. 111.
I know a thing in consciousness only as I relate it with the other elements of consciousness, to my self. Impressions can be my impressions only if they exist together in a common self-consciousness. In other words, to assert any kind of knowledge one has to invariably assert self-consciousness, which Hume totally rejects.

Again, how do we know Hume's 'train' of impressions and ideas (Inquiries p.47), as a train? In Hume's 'bundle or collection of different perceptions' (Treatise. p.302), what holds the bundle together or who knows it as a bundle? Again, his perceptions, which are in perpetual flux and movement. Each knows it self in a single movement of its existence and are completely ignorant of others. One perception has perished before another makes its appearance (Treatise. p.302). We ask, what holds the vanished members of the series in knowledge and project them in succession? Any body will agree with us that separate, single impressions (and ideas) are entirely different from the idea of 'succession' of them. We have no impression corresponding to the succession of impressions and ideas, therefore, in Hume's words, they cannot exist. Consequently, his theory incurred self-contradiction. Further, if we take away the implied self from Hume's theories, such as we compare ideas, we reflect our experiences, when we have found the resemblance, then the very existence of Hume's theories is threatened.

We have seen that Hume cannot dispense with the concept of self. Similarly he cannot do away with the concept of physical objects also, because of the following reasons. First, in his writings he writes about (physical) objects, of which we are assumed to have knowledge. Secondly, we hold that any one who discusses the concept of knowledge cannot escape the concept of 'object', which is an essential component and a precondition to knowledge. The question, "one has the knowledge of what?" is an important one in the process of knowing. James Orr appropriately writes, "...to speak of a thing as an 'object' means that I place it definitely in this system or order, which I distinguish from my self, that I regard it as having its fixed place and coherence in that order; as set in determinate relations with the other parts of the order;
as connected with it in what goes before and what comes after – in short as belonging to it and not to the course of my individual thoughts.” 101

It is our view that object can be given only in relations and therefore can never be a datum of sense as Hume claims. Knowledge is not a passive reception of impressions, but the apprehension of objects under their permanent relations. As we have seen Hume also admits of seven different relations. But this is in contradiction with his basic assumptions. Because a relation presupposes two terms and a comparison between them gives rise to the idea, and therefore is unthinkable except on the supposition of a relating principle such as has been seen to be implied in all knowledge. Further, idea of a relation cannot be an idea derived from a sense impression, as Hume asserts, but is the product of a mental act. This way, relations play a much larger role in the constitution of our knowledge than Hume permits. We are of the view that every object is given in relations as the condition of its being known at all. It exists in relations and through relations is known to be what it is. It would be correct to say that an object is more of an object of understanding, than object of sense.

Throughout his theory he negates the importance of human beings, his surrounding and the language through which he communicates objective reality. Suman Gupta rightly criticizes, “...no communications among human beings is possible without assuming human beings, their surrounding world, their practical activity and their power of acquiring knowledge. Hume wanted to communicate his idealistic worldview through a language, which he logically cannot do. Consequently he assumed the existence of every thing, which he wanted to deny.” 102

We have seen that the sole realities of Hume, impressions and ideas, are wholly ‘subjective, internal, perishing existences’. ‘Hume sees the ‘I’ or ‘self’ of man, which in reality is the principle of relation among the elements of consciousness, only as an

101 Ibid., p.116.
abstraction.' He conveniently forgets that 'I' never subsists in consciousness by itself without relation to something else, which it distinguishes itself as an object.

We conclude, therefore, Hume as a subjective idealist and his theories as pluralistic, empiricist, idealist epistemology and ontology.