Abstract of the Treatise of Human Nature

David Hume

[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought.

First launched: August 2014

Glossary

accuracy: Cognate of 'accurate', in the sense of 'detailed' or 'making fine distinctions' or 'precise' or the like; it doesn't imply *correct*.

anticipate: Get in ahead of.

compare: Hume here uses 'compare' and 'comparison' in a now-obsolete sense in which to 'compare' two items is just to put them side by side in your thought to see how they are related; there needn't be any question of their being alike.

curious: Used here in the sense of 'deserving or arousing curiosity; somewhat surprising' (OED).

demonstration: This means 'strictly logically rigorous proof, knock-down proof'. In Hume's usage, 'proving' something can be much weaker than 'demonstrating' it.

philosophy: As used here, 'philosophy' covers all of what we would called the 'sciences' as well as what we call 'philosophy'.

principle: Hume uses this word mainly in a sense, once common but now obsolete, in which 'principle' means 'source', 'cause', 'driver', 'energizer', or the like.

Pyrrhonian: The adjective from 'Pyyrho', the name of the founder of ancient Greek scepticism, who held that nothing can be known.

science: In early modern times this word applied to any body of knowledge or theory that is (perhaps) axiomatised and (certainly) conceptually highly organised.

sentiment: In the present work this always means 'feeling', a fact which Hume underlines by the repeated use of the phrase 'feeling or sentiment'.

Preface

You may think it somewhat extraordinary when I tell you that my aim in this small work is to make a larger work more intelligible to ordinary people by *abridging* it. ·But there's reason to think that this might succeed·. Those who aren't accustomed to abstract reasoning are apt to lose the thread of an argument that is drawn out to a great length, with each part

- •fortified by all the arguments,
- •guarded against all the objections, and
- •illustrated with all the views

that occur to a writer when carefully dealing with his subject. Such readers will more easily grasp a chain of reasoning that is more single and concise—one that offers only the chief propositions •linked together in a chain, •illustrated by some simple examples, and •confirmed by a few of the more forcible arguments. The parts lying nearer together can better be compared [see Glossary], and it is easier to track the argument from its first premises to its final conclusion.

The work of which I am here presenting an abstract has been complained of as obscure and hard to understand, and I'm inclined to think that this came as much from the argument's length as from its abstractedness. If I have remedied this inconvenience in any degree, I have succeeded in my aim. The book struck me as having an air of singularity and novelty that claimed the attention of the public, especially if it turns out that the author is right (this seems to be his view) that if his philosophy is accepted we must rebuild the greatest part of the sciences from the ground up. Such bold attempts are always advantageous in the literary world because they •shake off the yoke of authority, •accustom men to think for themselves, and •give new hints that able men may then develop. And even the opposition to them may •illustrate points in which no-one had previously suspected any difficulty.

An author must be contented to wait long and patiently for the learned world to reach an agreed view of his performance. It is his misfortune that he can't make an appeal to

the next bit: •the people who in all matters of common reason and eloquence are found so infallible a tribunal. He must be judged by •the few,

which might mean: •the members of the learned world as whole, who are an infallible judge in all matters of common reason and eloquence. He has to submit to the judgment of •the very few people who are specialists on his topic,

or it may mean: •the populace at large, who are an infallible judge in all matters of common reason and eloquence. He has to submit to the judgment of •the relatively few people who are members of the learned world,

whose verdict is more apt to be corrupted by partiality and prejudice, especially as no-one is a proper judge in these subjects unless he has often thought of them; and someone who *has* is likely to have formed a system of his own that he is entirely unwilling to relinquish. I hope the author will excuse me for intervening in this affair, because I am only trying to increase his audience by removing some difficulties that have kept many from grasping his meaning.

I have chosen one simple argument that I have carefully traced from the beginning to the end. This is the only thing I have taken care to do completely. The rest is only hints of particular passages that struck me as curious [see Glossary] and remarkable.

The Abstract

This book seems to be written on the same plan as several other works that have recently had a great vogue in England. The philosophical spirit that has been so much improved all over Europe within these last eighty years has been carried to as great a length in this kingdom as in any other. Our writers seem even to have started a new kind of philosophy that promises to be more interesting and more advantageous to mankind than any previous philosophy. Most of the philosophers of antiquity who dealt with human nature have shown more of a •delicacy of sentiment, a •just sense of morals, or a •greatness of soul, than a •depth of reasoning and reflection. They content themselves with representing the common sense of mankind in the strongest lights and with the best turn of thought and expression, without following out steadily a chain of propositions or forming the various truths into a regular science [see Glossary]. But it is at least worthwhile to see whether the science of man can be handled with the same accuracy [see Glossary] that is possible with several parts of natural philosophy [see Glossary]. There seems to be all the reason in the world to think that it can be carried to the greatest degree of exactness. If in examining several phenomena, we find that one common principle [see Glossary] is behind them all, and can trace this principle into another, we shall at last arrive at the few simple principles that all the rest depend on. And though we can never arrive at the ultimate principles it is satisfying to go as far as our faculties will allow us.

This seems to have been the aim of our recent philosophers, including this author. He proposes to anatomise human nature in a regular manner, and promises to draw no conclusions except ones authorised by experience. He talks with contempt of 'hypotheses', and conveys the opinion that those of our countrymen who have banished them from moral philosophy have done a more notable service to the world than Bacon, whom he considers as the father of experimental physics. He mentions in this context Locke, Shaftesbury, Mandeville, Hutcheson and Butler, who differ among themselves on many points but seem all to agree in basing their accurate disquisitions about human nature entirely on experience.

Beside the satisfaction of learning about what most nearly concerns us—·namely, our own nature·—it's safe to say that almost all the sciences are included in the science of human nature and are dependent on it.

- •Logic is solely concerned with explaining the principles and operations of our reasoning faculty and the nature of our ideas;
- •morals and criticism concern our tastes and sentiments; and
- •politics is a study of men as united in society and dependent on each other.

So this *Treatise of Human Nature* seems to be intended as a system of the sciences. The author has a complete treatment of matters concerning logic, and has laid the foundations for the other parts in his account of the passions.

The celebrated Leibniz has remarked that it is a defect in the common systems of logic that while they very fully explain the operations of the understanding in forming demonstrations they are too concise when they deal with probabilities and the other measures of evidence on which life and action entirely depend, and which are our guides even in most of our philosophical speculations. He applies this criticism to ·Locke's· *Essay on Human Understanding*, ·Malebranche's· *De la recherche de la vérité*, and *L'Art de penser* ·by Arnauld

and Nicole·. The author of the *Treatise of Human Nature* seems to have been aware of this defect in these philosophers, and has done his best to remedy it. As his book contains a great number of very new and remarkable speculations, it will be impossible to give the reader a fair notion of the whole; so I shall chiefly confine myself to his account of our reasonings from cause and effect. If I can make this intelligible to the reader, it may serve as an example of how the whole work goes.

Book 1

Our author begins with definitions. He calls a 'perception' anything that can be present to the mind, whether we

- •employ our senses, or
- •are driven with passion, or
- •exercise our thought and reflection.

He divides our perceptions into two kinds, namely *impressions* and *ideas*. When we feel a passion or emotion of any kind, or have the images of external objects conveyed by our senses, the perception of the mind is what he calls an 'impression', a word that he is using here in a new sense. When we reflect on a passion or an object that is not present, this perception is an 'idea'. So impressions are our lively and strong perceptions; ideas are the fainter and weaker ones. This distinction is evident—as evident as the distinction between feeling and thinking.

The first proposition he advances is that all our ideas (i.e. weak perceptions) are derived from our impressions (i.e. strong perceptions), and that we can never •think of anything that we haven't •seen outside us or •felt in our own minds. This proposition seems to be equivalent to the one that Locke took such pains to establish, namely that *no ideas are innate*. But that famous philosopher fails in accuracy when he brings all our perceptions under the term 'idea', because in that sense we *do* have innate ideas. It is obvious that our stronger perceptions or impressions are innate, and that natural affection, love of virtue, resentment, and all the other passions arise immediately from nature. I'm convinced that anyone who construed the question ·about innate ideas· in this way would be easily able to reconcile all parties. Malebranche would find himself at a loss to point out any thought of the mind that didn't represent something previously felt by it—either internally or by means of the external senses—and must admit that however we may compound and mix and augment and diminish our ideas, they are all derived from these sources. Locke, on the other hand, would readily agree that all our passions are a kind of natural instincts, derived from nothing but the original constitution of the human mind.

Our author holds that

> 'For deciding all controversies regarding ideas, no discovery could have been more fortunate than the one I have mentioned, that
>
> > impressions always precede ideas, and every ·simple· idea that comes into the imagination first makes its appearance in a corresponding impression.
>
> These •impressions are all so clear and evident that they there is no argument about them, though many of our •ideas are so obscure that it is almost impossible even for the mind in which they occur to say exactly what they are like and how they are made up.'

Accordingly, wherever an idea is ambiguous he has recourse to the impression that must render it clear and precise. And when he suspects that any philosophical term has no idea annexed to it (as is too common) he always asks from what impression that pretended idea is derived? If none can be produced he concludes that the term is wholly

meaningless. This is how he examines our ideas of 'substance' and 'essence'; and it would be good if this rigorous method were more practised in all philosophical debates.

Obviously all reasonings concerning *matters of fact* are based on the relation of cause and effect—we can never infer the existence of one object from another unless they are ·causally· connected together either mediately or immediately. In order to understand these reasonings, therefore, we must be perfectly acquainted with the idea of a *cause*; and to do that we must first look about us to find something that is the cause of something else.

Here is a billiard-ball lying on the table and another ball moving rapidly towards it. They collide, and the ball that was formerly at rest now starts to move. This is as perfect an instance of the relation of cause and effect as any we know by sensation or reflection; so let us examine it. It is evident that the two balls collided before the motion was communicated, and that there was no ·temporal· interval between the collision and the motion. Therefore the operation of all causes requires contiguity in time and place. It is also evident that the motion that was the cause is prior to the motion that was the effect. So that is something else that is required for every cause—priority in time. But this is not all. If we try other balls of the same kind in similar situations, we'll always find that the impulse of one produces motion in the other. So that is a third requirement, namely a constant conjunction between the cause and effect: every object like the cause produces some object like the effect. Beyond these three circumstances of contiguity, priority, and constant conjunction I can discover nothing in this cause. The first ball is in motion; touches the second; immediately the second is in motion; and when I try the experiment with the same or similar balls in the same or similar circumstances, I find that upon the motion and touch of one ball motion always follows in the other. In whatever shape I turn this matter, and however I examine it, I can find nothing further.

This is the case when cause and effect are both •present to the senses. Let us now see what our inference is based on when we conclude from one that the other •has existed or •will exist. When I see a ball moving in a straight line towards another, I immediately conclude that they will collide and that the second ball will move. This is an inference from cause to effect; and all our reasonings in the conduct of life are of this nature; it is the basis of all our belief in history, from it comes all philosophy [see Glossary] except geometry and arithmetic. If we can explain the inference from the collision of two balls, we'll be able to account for this operation of the mind in all instances.

If a man such as Adam were created with the full vigour of understanding but no experience, he could not infer motion in the second ball from the motion and impulse of the first. What makes us infer the effect is not anything that *reason* sees in the cause; if it were, the inference to the effect would amount to a demonstration [see Glossary], because it would be based merely on the comparison of ideas. But no inference from cause to effect amounts to a demonstration; and here is an evident proof of this:

- •The mind can always conceive any effect to follow from any cause, and indeed can conceive any event to follow any other;
- •Whatever we conceive is *possible*, at least in a metaphysical sense; but
- •Wherever a demonstration takes place, the contrary is *impossible* and implies a contradiction.

Therefore

- •There is no demonstration for any conjunction of cause and effect.

And this principle is generally accepted by philosophers.

So Adam (unless he was inspired!) would have to had *experience* of the effect that followed the collision of these two balls. He would have to have seen on several occasions that when the one ball struck the other the second always started to move. If he had seen enough instances of this kind, whenever he saw the one ball moving towards the other he would always conclude without hesitation that the second would start to move. His understanding would anticipate [see Glossary] his sight and form a conclusion suitable to his past experience.

So all reasonings concerning cause and effect are based on experience, and all reasonings from experience are based on the supposition that the course of nature will continue uniformly the same. We conclude that like causes in like circumstances will always produce like effects. It may now be worthwhile to consider what leads us to form such an infinitely important conclusion.

It is obvious that Adam, for all his science [see Glossary], could never have **demonstrated** that the course of nature must continue uniformly the same, with the future always conforming with the past. What is possible can never be demonstrated to be false; and it is possible that the course of nature will change because we can conceive such a change. And I go further: I contend that he couldn't even **prove by probable arguments** that the future must be conformable to the past. All probable arguments are built on the supposition that there is this conformity between the future and the past, so no such argument can ever prove that there is. This conformity is a matter of fact, and if it is to be proved it must be by a proof from experience. But our experience of •the past can't prove anything about •the future except on the supposition that there is a resemblance between them. So this is something that can't be proved in any way; we have to take it for granted without any proof.

We are determined by •custom alone to suppose that the future will conform to the past. When I see one billiard-ball moving towards another, my mind is immediately carried by •habit to the usual effect, and anticipates my sight by conceiving the second ball in motion. These objects, considered abstractly and independently of experience, contain nothing that leads me to form any such conclusion; and even after I have had experience of many repeated effects of this kind there's no argument that determines me to suppose that the effect will conform to past experience. The powers by which bodies operate are entirely unknown. We perceive only the qualities of them that we encounter through our senses; and what reason have we to think that the same •powers will always be conjoined with the same •sensible qualities?

So the guide of life is not *reason* but *custom*. It's custom alone that always determines the mind to suppose the future to conform with the past. However easy this step may seem, reason could never *ever* make it.

This is a very curious discovery, but it leads us to others that are still more curious. When I see one billiard-ball moving towards another, my mind is immediately carried by habit to the usual effect, and anticipates my sight by conceiving the second ball in motion. But is this all I do? Do I merely *conceive* the motion of the second ball? No surely. I also *believe* that it will move. What then is this belief? And how does it differ from the simple conception of a thing? Here is a new question that philosophers haven't thought of.

When a *demonstration* convinces me of a proposition, it not only makes me

> •conceive the proposition

but also makes me

> •aware that it is impossible to conceive anything contrary to it.

What is demonstratively false implies a contradiction, and

what implies a contradiction cannot be conceived. But with regard to any matter of fact, however strong the proof from experience may be, I can always conceive the contrary though I can't always believe it. So the belief makes some difference between the conception we assent to and the one we don't assent to.

There are only two hypotheses about what this difference might be. **[A]** It may be said that belief joins some new idea to the ones that we can conceive without assenting to them. But this hypothesis is false, ·and here are two proofs of its falsity·. **(1)** No such idea can be produced. When we simply conceive an object, we conceive it in all its parts. We conceive it as it might exist, though we don't believe it to exist. Our belief in it wouldn't reveal any new qualities. We can depict the entire object in our imagination without believing it. We can set it before our eyes, so to speak, with every circumstance of time and place. It is the very object conceived as it might exist; and when we believe it we can do no more.

(2) The mind is able to join together any ideas that don't involve a contradiction ·when conjoined·; so if belief consisted in some idea that we add to the simple conception, it would be in a man's power to believe anything that he can conceive, ·merely· by adding this idea to it.

Since therefore belief implies a conception and yet is something more, and since the 'something more' is not a new idea, **[B]** it must be a different *manner* of conceiving an object—something that •feels different and •doesn't depend on our will as all our ideas do. My mind runs by habit from the visible object of one ball moving towards another, to the usual effect of motion in the second ball. It not only conceives that motion but feels something different in the conception of it from a mere daydream of the imagination. The presence of this visible object, and the constant conjunction of that particular effect, make the idea feel different from the loose ideas that come into the mind without any introduction. This conclusion seems a little surprising; but we are led into it by a chain of propositions that admit of no doubt. To ease your memory I shall briefly repeat them.

- •No matter of fact can be proved except from its cause or its effect.
- •Nothing can be known to be the cause of something else except by experience.
- •We can give no *reason* for extending our past experience to the future, and are determined solely by *custom* when we conceive an effect to follow from its usual cause.
- •But as well as conceiving the effect to follow, we believe that it will do so.
- •This belief joins no new idea to the conception. It only varies the manner of conceiving and makes a difference to our feeling or sentiment [see Glossary].
- •Therefore, belief in any matter of fact arises only from custom, and is *an idea conceived in a special manner*.

Our author proceeds to explain the manner or feeling that makes belief different from a loose conception. He seems to be aware that it is impossible by words to describe this feeling, which everyone must be conscious of in himself. He variously describes it as a conception that is

- •'stronger',
- •'more lively',
- •'more vivid',
- •'firmer', or
- •'more intense'.

Whatever name we may give to this feeling that constitutes belief, our author thinks it obvious that it has a more forcible effect on the mind than fiction and mere conception. He proves this by the influence of belief on the passions and

on the imagination, which are only moved by truth or what is taken for truth. For all the poet's skill, poetry can never cause a passion like one in real life. It fails in the original conception of its objects, which never *feel* the same as those that command our belief.

Our author, taking it that he had sufficiently proved that the ideas we assent to are different in feeling from other ideas, and that this feeling is more firm and lively than our common conception, tries next to explain the cause of this lively feeling by an analogy with other acts of the mind. His reasoning seems to be curious [see Glossary]; but I could hardly make it intelligible (let alone probable) to you without going into details that would exceed the length-limit that I have set myself.

I also omit many arguments that he adduces to prove that belief consists merely in a special feeling or sentiment. I'll mention just one. Our past experience is not always uniform: sometimes one effect follows from a cause, sometimes another. If one is more common than any other, that's the one we believe will exist. I see a billiard-ball moving towards another. I can't tell whether

- •it is rolling, moving on its axis, or
- •it was struck so that it skids along the table ·without rolling·.

In the first case, I know that it won't stop after the collision. In the second case it may stop. The first is most common, and therefore that's the effect I expect. But I also conceive the other effect, and conceive it as possible and as connected with the cause. If one conception weren't different in the feeling or sentiment from the other there would be no difference between them.

I have confined myself in this whole reasoning to the relation of cause and effect, as revealed in the motions and operations of matter. But the same reasoning extends to the operations of the mind. Whether we consider the influence of the will in moving our body or in governing our thought, it is safe to say that we could never foretell the effect merely from the consideration of the cause, without experience. And even after we have experience of these effects, what leads us to make this experience the standard of our future judgments is custom alone, not reason. When the cause is presented, the mind (from habit) immediately passes to the conception of and belief in the usual effect. This belief is something different from the conception, but it doesn't join any new idea to it. It only makes it be felt differently by making it stronger and more lively.

Having dealt with this important point concerning the nature of the inference from •cause and effect, our author retraces his steps and examines anew the idea of •that relation. In considering the motion communicated from one ball to another, we could find nothing but •contiguity, •priority in the cause, and •constant conjunction. But it is commonly supposed that in addition to these there is a •necessary connection between the cause and effect, and that the cause has something that we call a 'power' or 'force' or 'energy'. The question is, what idea is annexed to these terms? ·That is, what do they mean?· If all our ideas or thoughts are derived from our impressions, this power must reveal itself either to our senses or to our internal feeling. But it is so far from revealing itself to our senses in the operations of matter that the Cartesians confidently said that matter is utterly deprived of energy and that all its operations are performed merely by the energy of the supreme Being. But the question arises: What idea do we have of energy or power even in the supreme Being? According to those who deny innate ideas, our only idea of a Deity is a composite whose parts are ideas that we acquire from reflecting on the operations of our own minds; and our •minds provide

us with no more notion of energy than •matter does. When we consider our will or volition *a priori*, abstracting from experience, we can never infer any effect from it. And when we look to experience for help, it only shows us objects contiguous, successive, and constantly conjoined. So what we have to conclude regarding the words 'force' and 'energy' is that either

- •we have no idea at all attached to them, so that they are altogether insignificant, or
- •they mean simply the determination of our thought, acquired by habit, to pass from the cause to its usual effect.

If you want to understand this thoroughly, you must consult the author himself ·by reading *The Treatise of Human Nature*·. All I aim to do here is to make the learned world grasp that there is some difficulty in the case, and that a solution to it will have to be something very new and extraordinary—as new as the difficulty itself.

From what I have said so far you'll easily see that the philosophy contained in this book is very sceptical, and tends to give us a notion of the imperfections and narrow limits of human understanding. In it almost all reasoning is reduced to experience; and the belief that comes with experience is explained as merely a special sentiment—a lively conception—produced by habit. And that is not all. When we believe anything regarding the outside world, or suppose an object to exist a moment after we stop perceiving it, this belief is nothing but a sentiment of the same kind. Our author emphatically presents several other sceptical views, concluding that we assent to our faculties and employ our reason only because *we cannot help it*. Philosophy would make us entirely Pyrrhonian [see Glossary] if ·our· nature weren't too strong for it.

I shall conclude my account of this author's Book 1 with a report on two opinions that seem to be uniquely his, as indeed are most of his opinions. **[A]** He asserts that the soul ·or mind·, as far as we can conceive it, is nothing but a system or sequence of different perceptions—those of heat and cold, love and anger, thoughts and sensations—all united together but without any perfect simplicity or identity. [Note on 'perfect simplicity or identity'. Hume's view that your mind is a series of mental states or events is being opposed here to the view of Descartes and many others that your mind is a single immaterial *thing* which exists—that **identical** thing—through all the states or events that characterise it. The states or events are episodes in its life, but not (as Hume holds) *parts* of it. The mind doesn't have parts, and is in that sense **simple**.]

Descartes maintained that thought is the essence of the mind—not this thought or that thought but *thought in general*. This seems to be absolutely unintelligible because everything that exists is *particular*, so that it must be our several *particular* perceptions that compose the mind. I say 'compose' the mind, not 'belong to' it. The mind is not a substance in which the perceptions inhere—·i.e. that *has* the perceptions·. That notion is as unintelligible as the Cartesian view that thought or perception in general is the essence of the mind. We have no idea of substance of any kind, because each of our ideas is derived from some impression, and we have no impression of any substance, whether material or spiritual [here = 'mental']. We know nothing but particular qualities and perceptions. Just as our idea of any body—a peach, for instance—is only the idea of a particular taste, colour, shape, size, consistency, etc. so also our idea of any mind is only that of particular perceptions, without the notion of anything we call substance, either simple or compound.

[B] And then there is our author's view about geometry. Having denied the infinite divisibility of extension, he finds himself obliged to refute the mathematical arguments that have been produced in support of it—and indeed the mathematical arguments are the only ones of any weight. He does this denying that geometry is an exact enough science to admit of conclusions that are as subtle—·as fine-grained·—as those concerning infinite divisibility. His arguments can be stated thus: All geometry is based on the notions of equality and inequality, so how exact a science it can be depends on how exact a standard we have of those relations. Now there is an exact standard of equality for a quantity that is composed of indivisible points: two lines are equal when the numbers of the points that compose them are equal, so that there's a point in one corresponding to each point in the other. But though this standard is exact, it is useless because we can never calculate the number of points in any line. Also, it is based on the supposition of finite divisibility, so it can't yield a conclusion against it. If we reject this standard of equality, we have none that has any claim to exactness. I find two that are commonly made use of. **(i)** Two lines more than a yard long, for instance, are said to be equal when they contain any lesser quantity—e.g. an inch—an equal number of times. But this runs in a circle. For the quantity we call 'an inch' in the one is supposed to be equal to what we call 'an inch' in the other; and we still have the question of •what standard we use when we judge them to be equal—or, in other words, •what we mean when we say they are equal; and if we answer this in terms of still smaller quantities, we go on *ad infinitum*. So this is no standard of equality. **(ii)** Most philosophers, when asked what they mean by 'equality', say that the word can't be defined and that to make someone understand it we need only place before him two equal bodies, such as two diameters of a circle, that term. This is taking •the general appearance of the objects to be •the standard of that proportion, making our imagination and senses the ultimate judges of it. But a standard like *that* can't be exact, and can't lead to any conclusion contrary to the imagination and senses.

Whether this reasoning is sound or not must be left to the learned world to judge. It is certainly to be wished that some way would be found to reconcile philosophy with common sense, which with regard to the question of infinite divisibility have waged most cruel wars against each other.

Book 2

I now proceed to give some account of the second volume of this work, which treats of the passions. It is easier to understand than the first, but it contains opinions that are just as new and extraordinary. The author begins with *pride* and *humility*. He remarks that the objects arousing these passions are very numerous and seemingly very different from each other. Pride or self-esteem can arise from

- •qualities of the mind: wit, good sense, learning, courage, integrity;
- •qualities of the body: beauty, strength, agility, good bearing, skill in dancing, riding, fencing;
- •external advantages: country, family, children, relations, riches, houses, gardens, horses, dogs, clothes.

He then proceeds to find out the common circumstance in which all these objects agree, and which causes them to operate on the passions. His theory also applies to love and hatred and other passions. His treatment of these questions is curious, but it couldn't be made intelligible without a long discourse; so I shall here omit it.

It may be more acceptable to the reader to be informed of what our author says about free will. He has laid the foundation of his doctrine ·about that· in what he said

concerning cause and effect, as above explained:

> 'Everyone accepts that the operations of external bodies are **necessary**, and that in the communication of their motion, in their attraction, and mutual cohesion, there are not the least traces of indifference or **liberty**'. — 'So anything that is in this respect on the same footing as matter must be acknowledged to be necessary. To know whether this is the case with the actions of the •mind, let us examine •matter and consider what the basis is for the idea of a necessity in its operations, and why we conclude that one body or action is the infallible cause of another.
>
> 'I have already remarked that in no single instance is the ultimate connection of any objects discoverable, either by our senses or our reason, and that we can never penetrate so far into the essence and construction of bodies, as to perceive the principle [see Glossary] on which their mutual influence is based. All we are acquainted with is their constant union; and it is from the constant union that the necessity arises, when the mind is determined to pass from one object to its usual attendant, and infer the existence of the latter from that of the former. Here then are two particulars that we are to regard as essential to necessity, namely the •constant **union** and •the **inference** of the mind; and wherever we find these we must acknowledge a necessity.'

Now, nothing is more evident than the constant union of particular actions with particular motives. It's true that not *all* actions are *always* united with their proper motives, but this uncertainty is no more than what can be seen every day in the actions of matter, where the mixture and uncertainty of causes often make the effect variable and uncertain. Thirty grains of opium will kill any man who isn't accustomed to it, though thirty grains of rhubarb won't always purge him. Similarly, the fear of death will always make a man go twenty paces out of his road, though it won't always make him do a bad action.

And as there is often a constant conjunction of the actions of the will with their motives, so the inference from the one to the other is often as certain as any reasoning concerning bodies: and there is always an inference proportioned to the constancy of the conjunction. On this is founded our belief in witnesses, our credit in history, and indeed all kinds of moral evidence, and almost the whole conduct of life.

Our author claims that this reasoning puts the whole controversy in a new light, by giving a new definition of necessity. And indeed the most zealous advocates for free will must allow this **union** and **inference** with regard to human actions. They will only deny that this is all there is to necessity. But then they must show that we have an idea of something else in the actions of matter, and according to the foregoing reasoning that's impossible.

Throughout this book there are great claims to new discoveries in philosophy; but if anything can entitle the author to the glorious name of 'inventor' [here = 'discoverer'], it is the use he makes of the principle of the *association of ideas*, which enters into most of his philosophy. Our imagination has a great authority over our ideas; and there are no ideas that it can't separate and join and compose into all the varieties of fiction. But despite this power of the imagination, there is a secret tie or union among particular ideas that causes the mind to conjoin them more frequently, and makes one on its appearance introduce the other. This is the source of •relevance in conversation, of •connectedness in writing, and of •the thread or chain of thought that a man naturally maintains even in the loosest daydream. These principles of association come down to three:

- •Resemblance: a picture naturally makes us think of the man it is a picture of;
- •Contiguity: when ·the cathedral of· St. Denis is mentioned, the idea of Paris naturally occurs;
- •Causation: when we think of the son, we are apt to carry our attention to the father.

It will be easy to conceive how important these principles must be in the science of human nature if we consider that so far as the mind is concerned these three are the only links that bind the parts of the universe together, or connect us with any person or object exterior to ourselves. Why? Because it is purely by means of •thought that anything operates upon our passions, and these three are the only ties of our •thoughts; so they really are *to us* the cement of the universe, and all the operations of the mind must in a great measure depend on them.