

THE SPINOZISTIC HUME
AN ESSAY ON HIS AFFINITY WITH SPINOZA.¹

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Preface

This work is the result of a 30 years period of intensive study, mental ripening, repeated reflection, discussions with colleagues, thorough research, and, of course, favourable circumstances. I remember that when I, as a member of a philosophical circle in which classical texts were on the program, first read Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, it was at once an astonishing experience and surprising revelation for me, who was up till then professionally working on Spinoza's texts. I really recognized everywhere Spinoza *in* (not *into*) Hume. How was this possible? My experience became an unsolved problem that had to wait for better times and for (re)enforcing evidence from further reading and studying literature, above all Hume's predecessors Locke and Mandeville.

Gradually the Hume of my academic education lost his identity and underwent a drastic metamorphosis. The Hume I present here is completely a-historical from the contemporary perspective. Whether he is the real historical one, is to decide by the serious student, who takes the trouble to compare carefully the *philological* evidence: the many fragments, often crypto-quotations, from Hume juxtaposed in tables to source places in Spinoza, accompanied by my introducing and exposing comments.

Will the star philosopher of the 20th century (since his adoption as a patron by the Wiener Kreis), the great Enlightener also of the 18th century in England, finally fall from his throne? Not at all. His relation to Spinoza, his ingenious 'recreation' and continuation of the super wisdom of Spinoza in his extremely rich 'science of man', will only give more splendour to his name. As a first class scholar he will bring back and restore English language philosophy to the foundation, on which it was built.

In his eventually coming years (he counts 80 years) the author of this book would greatly enjoy to see other scholars subscribe to his innovative interpretation and perceive the real source of Hume's greatness. He is, moreover, convinced that the original Hume would also be very helpful for a better understanding of Spinoza's paradoxical intentions.

¹ This is an English version of my *David Hume* (1711-1776). *Wetenschappelijke ethica van een overtuigd Spinozist* (Vrijstad 2010, 100 A-4 pp).

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QUOTED WORKS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Spinoza

Opera quae supersunt omnia. Edidit C. H. Bruder (Leipzig: Taugnitz 1843).

Ethics. Translated by Andrew Boyle and revised by G.H.R. Parkinson (London: Everyman's Library 1989).

Korte Verhandelng van God, de Mensch en deszelfs Welstand. Introduzione, edizione, traduzione e commento di Filippo Mignini (Aquila: Japadre 1986).

Short Treatise on God, Man and his Well-Being, in: *The Collected Works of Spinoza. Edited and translated by Edwin Curley* (Princeton U.P. 1985).

Principles of Cartesian Philosophy, with Metaphysical Thoughts. Translated by S. Shirley; Introduction and notes by St. Barbone & Lee Rice (Indianapolis: Hackett 1998)

The Letters. Translated by S. Shsirley. Notes by Steven Barbone, LeeRice, Jacob Adler (Indianapolis: Hackett 1995).

Theologico-political Treatise & Political Treatise. Translated by R. H. Elwes (New York: Dover Publications 1951).

Places in the *Ethica* (E.) are indicated by an Arabic number for the part, slash, the number of the proposition, followed eventually by s (for scholium), c (for corollary), ax (for axiom), df (for definition).

PPC= Principia Philosophiae Renati Des Cartes; CM= Cogitata Metaphysica.

TTP= Tractatus Theologico-Politicus; TP= Tractatus Politicus.

Quotes from or references to places in these works are indicated by mentioning numbers of chapter and articles, always followed by page number of the respective English translation. A slash in references means: Spinoza.

Hume

A Treatise of Human Nature. Edited with an introduction by Ernest C. Mossner (London: Pelican Books 1969). This title is indicated with 'Treatise'.

Enquiries concerning the human understanding and concerning the principles of morals. Reprinted from the 1777 edition and edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1972). Abbreviations for these enquiries are EHU and EPM.

Essays moral, political and literary. Ed. by Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics 1985).

Dialogues concerning natural religion. Edited by Henry D.Aiken (New York: Hafner Press 18th pr. 1977). Abbreviated as 'Dialogues'.

Natural History of Religion in Hume's Philosophical Works vol. 5 (London: Longmans 1875). Abbreviated as NHR.

1. Hume in the historiography

"Hume stands for all time as the antithesis of Spinoza in his thought". This verdict of John H. Randall in his well-known *The Career of Philosophy from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (1962) was decades ago quoted by Richard Popkin who, as the first Anglo-Saxon historian, came to the conclusion that it cannot stand scrutiny. Hume's famous denunciation of Spinoza in his *Treatise of Human Nature* is, so he argues, only rhetorical. "Hume was originally overtly interested in Spinoza", a thesis he illustrates by pointing to the affinity between their theories of religion.² It took a decade before the writer of this text could enforce Popkin's claim by providing a series of Hume-quotes similar to or coming nearby statements of Spinoza.³ In the latter of these two articles I concluded that "Hume is an eminent interpreter and 'translator' of many Spinozistic propositions, of which he must have had first hand knowledge". Later in the same year the Hume scholar Annette Baier joined me and confirmed my interpretation with her "David Hume, Spinozist", in which she stated without any hesitation or question mark: "Hume's agreements with Spinoza are deeper than his more obvious and more superficial disagreements"⁴. Another four contributions are worth mentioning here and add new viewpoints. First J. P. Clero sees a strong presence of Spinoza and Spinozism in the *Treatise* and in the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, which brought him to his independent statement, that "il est probable que Hume ait directement lu Spinoza".⁵ However, a demonstration of this direct relation of Hume to the text of Spinoza still failed. This is well done by Douglas den Uyl and Lee Rice in their article "Spinoza and Hume on individuals".⁶ Also Emanuela Scribano, an Italian Spinoza scholar succeeds in convincing her readers of Hume's closeness to various key passages of the *Ethica* and concentrates especially on the always intriguing question of causality. Her article "Hume and Spinoza on the relation of Cause and Effect" deprives Hume successfully of the originality of his explanation.⁷ Finally Paul Russell remarked persuasively, that the Tacitus-quote on the title-page of Hume's *Treatise* must be perceived as "a direct and unambiguous allusion to Spinoza".⁸ But in spite of these scarce papers which state a positive relation between Hume and Spinoza, modern scholarship fully denies it. This is e.g. testified by a recent encyclopaedic presentation in the *Cambridge Companion to Hume*, wherein the

²"Hume and Spinoza" in *Hume Studies* 5 (1979) 45-93. In the German speaking world Popkin had a forerunner in the famous historian Wilhelm Windelband who wrote in the 19th century that "David Hume continued Spinoza's work more than two generations after him". See his *Introduction to the Human Sciences*. Ed. by R. A. Makkreel and F. Rodi (Princeton U.P.1989), p. 210.

³"Hume contra Spinoza?" and "More about Hume's Debt to Spinoza" in *Hume Studies* 16 (1990) 89-105 and ib. 19 (1993) 55-75.

⁴*Hume Studies* 19 (1993) 237-251.

⁵"La présence de Spinoza et du Spinozisme dans le *Traité de la nature humaine* et les *Dialogues sur la religion naturelle* de Hume" in O. Bloch (ed.) *Spinoza au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris1990) 203-213.

⁶In *Reason Papers*, no. 15, p. 91-117. Lee C. Rice treated the same subject in his "Autour de l'éthique de Spinoza et de Hume" in *La Ética de Spinoza. Fundamentos y significado* (Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha (1990) 99-108, which contribution he started with the statement: "Une comparaison de Spinoza avec Hume sur les questions de la nature de l'individu et la notion de causalité révèle en general que les points d'accord sont plus nombreux que ceux de disaccord".

⁷See D. Garber & St. Nadler (eds), *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, vol. IV (Oxford 2009) 227-243.

⁸"Atheism and the Title-Page of Hume's *Treatise*" in *Hume Studies* 14 (1988) p. 415. See also chapter 7 ("Atheism under Cover: Esoteric Communication on Hume's Titles Pages") in his *The Riddle of Hume's Treatise. Skepticism, Naturalism, and Irreligion* (Oxford U.P. 2008), pp. 70-83.

name 'Spinoza' does not even once appear in the Index of Names.⁹ In another, even more recent, encyclopaedic presentation, the name 'Spinoza' is 5 times cursorily mentioned for a very marginal and superficial comparison. Its authors don't have the least suspect of any influence of Spinoza on Hume and never discuss the relation.¹⁰

A totally different kind of work in the history of philosophy are the two voluminous volumes (together 1100 pages) of Gilbert Boss under the title *La différence des philosophies. Hume & Spinoza*, privately published by the author's Editions du Grand Midi in 1982. As the title indicates sufficiently, the author's objective is to demonstrate the fundamental disagreement between Hume and Spinoza. In my view his enterprise is, reckoned in hours of labour, a precious failure, not in the least because Boss does not see that a new type of 'science of man' is the common ground of Spinoza and Hume, on which they shake each others hand. Nor does he surpass the traditional, but now outdated, opposition between the rationalist and the empiricist. According to him Hume probably also did not read Spinoza's work before he wrote the *Treatise*.¹¹ Hume's judgement about his own first publication, that 'it fell dead from the press', is fully appropriate for this curious piece of academic (?) work.¹²

The thesis of this paper is that careful research discovers in close reading many places where Hume profits from Spinoza's descriptions and enables us to recognize clearly the radical philosophical position of the master in the congeniality of the student's text. Philological comparison of their works leads us to characterize many cases as crypto-quotations. I must, therefore, completely disagree with Michael Della Rocca's recent sketch of the relation of Hume to Spinoza:

In many ways, Hume's system is the flip-side of Spinoza's. Whereas Spinoza sees the world as fundamentally one thing, Hume sees the world as a plurality of very many independent things, all "loose and separate". Whereas Spinoza is not a sceptic, Hume arguably is. Whereas Spinoza reduces consciousness and all other mental features to representation, Hume does not. Whereas Spinoza recognizes only one kind of mental state – representation – which is by its nature active, Hume has two kinds of mental states: reasons or representations on the one hand, and passions, non-representational mental states, on the other hand, which are the only source of activity in the mind. Underlying these differences is Hume's and Spinoza's fundamental disagreement over the *Principle of Sufficient Reason*. Hume denied the PSR and that is why he was confident in rejecting monism and in embracing scepticism and in accepting a bifurcation of passions and actions in the mind. Spinoza accepted the PSR and so differed from Hume in all these ways. They agreed, though, in seeing the PSR

⁹ The survey, written by 15 outstanding scholars, is edited by D. F. Norton & J. Taylor (Cambridge UP 2009²). The volume counts 554 pages.

¹⁰ *A Companion to Spinoza*. Ed. by Elisabeth S. Radcliffe (Wiley & Blackwell 2011). Its 593 pages are filled by contributions of 28 Hume experts.

¹¹ "Hume, s'il n'avait probablement pas lu Spinoza, connaissait les écrits de Descartes..." (p. 28). Idem p. 1015.

¹² There appeared in total 5 rather short reviews; in none the work was praised or recommended. In *Revue de Théologie et Philosophie* (1983/4) D. Christoff wrote that Boss defended that the doctrines of Spinoza and Hume are opposed to each other (p. 417). In *Archives de Philosophie* (1984/4) A. Matheron sceptically suggested that according to the philosophical experience of the author "la vérité n'est pas une mais plurielle" (p. 20). In *Studia Philosophica* (1984) R. Glauser stated that Boss' comparative study showed that the differences of thought between Spinoza and Hume presuppose commensurability (p. 236). In *Les Etudes Philosophiques* (1990/1) R. Sasso wrote about the "critiques croisées et jamais définitivement triomphantes, entre l'empiriste et le rationaliste. Les deux philosophies s'opposent le plus là où elles se ressemblent le plus" (p. 382). Finally in *Studia Spinozana* (1985) Lee Rice seems to be the sincerest commentator with his confession: "I found it quite difficult to trace the threads of unity through the thousand odd pages" (p. 442). I guess that not even one reviewer read half the book nor did I. But yet I will incidentally make use of it.

as the linchpin of philosophy. Spinoza saw the results that the PSR would generate, and he embraced them; Hume recoiled. But for both of them, there was no middle-ground position of the kind that most philosophers are generally and unthinkingly happy to try to occupy.¹³

It is my intention in this article to refute all these claims about Hume as the reverse side of Spinoza and to demonstrate Hume's 'clandestine Spinozism' more convincingly than I could do so in my earlier papers mentioned in the footnotes. My argument will cover a broad scale of subjects, including the 'moral subjects' of the third part of his *Treatise*, which I had to leave undiscussed in the nineties of the former century because I was in that time much occupied with new discoveries concerning Spinoza.¹⁴

2. With Locke, Bayle, Ramsay, Mandeville on the way to Spinoza

But how to start? A short biographical remark does not seem to be useless. Along three or four ways Hume had indirect contact with Spinoza. First, in his student times he devoured Locke's *Essay concerning human understanding* and confessed in his old days to James Boswell that "he never entertained any belief in Religion since he began to read Locke ...". On his turn Locke was deeply influenced by Spinoza and this was perceived by many contemporaries.¹⁵ Why not by Hume, who was a student eager to learn about the newest developments in philosophy? Anyhow, he took over many a Spinozistic item from the *Essay*, among which above all empiricism, the view on the inner self as a collection of ideas and the distinction between three kinds of knowledge. Second, he was overtly an enthusiastic reader of Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. Bayle provided him not only with all possible details about Spinoza's life, but this "single most widely read and influential thinker of the Early Enlightenment"¹⁶ certainly also promoted Spinozism in the "cache-cache continuel et presque maniaque" of the numerous metaphysical articles of the *Dictionnaire*.¹⁷ Hume's recommendation of the *Dictionnaire* of Spinoza's pseudo-opponent in his Letter to a Physician (Michael Ramsay) (26-8-1737) might be interpreted as a subtle indication and at the same time a harmless action to immunize his own position. Further, during his stay in France in the company of the Chevalier Andrew Michael Ramsay (1734-1737), the hot polemics there about Spinoza could impossibly escape his attention.¹⁸ Moreover, the great work that his patron prepared in these years, *Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion, unfolded in a geometrical order* (posthumously published in 1748-1749), was one great discussion with Spinoza, like also his earlier *Les Voyages de Cyrus* (1727). Ramsey's love-hatred relation to Spinoza was based on the text of the *Ethica*, that his friend and industrious fellow would likely have acquired too or looked into. And if not, he must have been acquainted with its content from discussions with his 30 years older 'mentor', who was more than simply fascinated by the horrible Spinoza. Scanning the text of the *Philosophical Principles* will easily convince us of the probability of Hume's closeness to

¹³ See his *Spinoza* (London 2008), p. 281.

¹⁴ For this book Hume also used the title of Spinoza's whole treatise: 'system of ethics'. See *Treatise* 3.1.2 (p. 525) and 3.3.4 (p. 656). The page numbers refer henceforth to the Pelican Classics Edition (which is good enough).

¹⁵ See Wim Klever, *John Locke (1632-1704). Vermomde en miskende Spinozist* (Vrijstad 2010²) and its abbreviated English version on http://www.benedictusdespinoza.nl/lit/Locke's_Disguised_Spinozism.pdf

¹⁶ "Cf. J. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment* (Oxford 2001), p. 331.

¹⁷ Cf. G. Mori, *Bayle philosophe* (Paris 1999), p. 173.

¹⁸ Cf. Paul Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée Française avant la Révolution* (Paris 1982²). Malebranche, whose *Recherche de la Vérité* was likewise warmly recommended by Hume, "a souffert toute sa vie dans sa conscience de chrétien et de prêtre de l'existence même du Spinozisme" (p. 239).

Spinoza's text in those years; the pages are mostly printed like replica's of the *Ethica*-pages.¹⁹ As it appears from a two pages long footnote in section xiii of his *Natural History of Religion*, Hume was rather familiar with this 'ingenious author' with a 'great stock of humanity', without being able to follow his 'curious' opinions. 'Curious' why and against what? Finally it is not far fetched to surmise another access of Hume to Spinoza via his reading of Mandeville, who was certainly not only a follower and admirer of Bayle, but also of Spinoza himself. Quite a lot of his 'private vices, public benefits' book (*The Fable of the Bees*, 1714) is to be considered a reshuffling and original illustration of purely Spinozistic propositions about human behaviour.²⁰ At the end of *Fable of the Bees, Part II* (1729) Cleomenes is forced by Horatio to confess that his doctrine is a 'Spinosism in Epitome'.²¹

3. A bird's eye view on the divisions of the *Ethica* and the *Treatise*

A good entrance to our project (demonstrating Hume's affinity with Spinoza) is the obvious but hardly ever remarked similarity between the three books of Hume's *Treatise* and the three central parts of Spinoza's *Ethica*, as shown in the following diagram:

| | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Part I - <i>De Deo</i> | |
| Part II – <i>De natura et origine mentis</i> | Book I – On the Understanding |
| Part III – <i>De origine et natura affectuum</i> | Book II – On the Passions |
| Part IV – <i>De servitute humana seu de affectuum viribus</i> | Book III – Of Morals |
| Part V – <i>De potentia intellectus seu de libertate humana</i> | |

The first item of the mentioned triad is in both cases the epistemology, the second the psychology, the third the ethical and political theory. For those who know already the contents of the respective parts and books there cannot be any doubt that the stuff is not only coordinated but also related. But is there no equivalent in Hume for the first and fifth parts of the *Ethica*? Not at first sight. His first blank space, however, can easily be filled by his naturalism and determinism, the main points of Spinoza's *De Deo*, which 'cut off noble parts' were published by Hume in later writings.²² And Spinoza's final part about man's happy *acquiescentia* as the effect of the *amor erga rem immutabilem* might be recognized in Hume's concluding section in which he explains that the virtuous, 'stedfast and immutable' man acquires 'an accession of alacrity in his pursuits of knowledge', a 'new lustre in the eyes of mankind' next to 'peace and inward satisfaction', which are without exception terms which remind the informed reader of Spinoza's qualification of the final state of our development. The 'lustre' of this final state of man's salvation echoes Spinoza's Bible based '*gloria*' in *Ethica* 5/36s.

¹⁹ For a short introduction to Ramsay see J.P. Wright, *Hume's Treatise of Human Nature* (Cambridge UP 2009, 20-25).

²⁰ See D. J. Den Uyl, "Passion, State, and Progress: Spinoza and Mandeville on the nature of Human Association" in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 25 (1987) 369-395.

²¹ Ed. by F. B. Kaye (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund 1992) p. 312. Cf. Wim Klever, *Mandeville (1670-1733). Cynisch essayist op basis van Spinoza's Ethica* (Vrijstad 2010). See also J. P. Wright, who remarks various 'echoes' of Mandeville's *Treatise of the Hypochondriack and Hysterick Disease* (1730) and his *Enquiry into the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War* (1732) in Hume's life and texts (o.c.p. 8-13).

²² See for instance section 11 hereafter.

4. Title-page Treatise: liberty of the press, method of exposition and anonymity

In a footnote I referred already to Paul Russell's suggestion that Hume signals his intellectual background on the title –page of the *Treatise* by means of a well known Tacitus-quote, that has a prominent place in the Preface of Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (1670) and, moreover, partially reappears as the title of its 20th chapter, in which "*ostenditur, in libera republica unicuique et sentire quae velit, et quae sentiat dicere licere*". Russell is right in claiming that this is "a direct and unambiguous allusion to Spinoza".²³ In the essay *On the Liberty of the Press* (1641) one finds another reference to this Tacitus-quote in a context, which makes the connection with Spinoza even more convincing.

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|---|--|
| Nothing is more apt to surprise a foreigner, than the extreme liberty, which we enjoy <i>in this country</i> , of communicating whatever we please to the public, and of openly censuring every measure, entered into by the king or his ministers. ²⁴ | Seeing that we have the rare happiness of living <i>in a republic</i> , where everyone's judgment is free and unshackled, where each may worship God as his conscience dictates... ²⁵ |
|---|--|

The main reason why the liberty of the press (censuring oppressive measures of the political authority), indicated by Hume in the last phrase and further stressed in the final passage of his essay, is magisterially developed by Spinoza in TTP 20. Both authors also assert that liberty of the press is the necessary condition for coming to a high degree of civilisation, without which the people would easily remain in a situation of slavery.

| | |
|--|--|
| The spirit of the people must frequently be roused, in order to curb the ambition of the court [...] Nothing is so effectual to this purpose as the liberty of the press, by which all the learning, wit, and genius of the nation may be employed on the side of freedom, and every one be animated to its defence? (<i>Essays</i> p. 12). | Such freedom is absolutely necessary for progress in science and the liberal arts [...] In proportion as the power of free judgment is withheld we depart from the natural condition of mankind, and consequently the government becomes more tyrannical (TTP p. 261 & 264). |
|--|--|

The words chosen are different, but both points are equally present in the text of our authors. They draw the same conclusion or better: indicate the same implication of the Tacitus-quote.

But there is even more information as well as 'non-information' on the title-page that might induce the reader to think of Spinoza as a point of reference. '*Treatise*' is a heavy weighing word meaning a systematic treatment in which things are demonstrated. Neither Locke nor Mandeville had laid a claim on this term. Malebranche was modest in his "*De la Recherche de la Vérité*". Of his immediate predecessors only Berkeley had made use of the word in his '*A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*' (1710), but far more prominently Spinoza with his *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, *Tractatus de intellectus*

²³ O.c. p. 415. For more details about this quote cf. Wim Klever, *Spinoza classicus. Antieke bronnen van een moderne denker* (Budel 2005) p. 125ff.

²⁴ See David Hume, *Essays moral, political, and literary*. Ed. by E. F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund 1987) p. 9.

²⁵ According to the translation of R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover Publications 1951), p. 6.

emendatione, *Tractatus politicus* and his *Ethica*, indicated by himself in the text as well in the correspondence as a '*tractatus*'. Contemporaries must have known this, since the Spinozistic disease was widely spread in England and on the continent.

But a less minor point is the addition of a remark on the method of argumentation in this writing. Spinoza clarified his work by mentioning his 'geometrical method' (*ordine geometrico demonstrata*). Hume followed this pattern of emphasizing one's method but distinguished himself by his subtitle: "An Attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning". Did this 'method of reasoning', resulting into 'a complete chain of reasoning'²⁶ between the subjects of book 1 and 2, really differ from Spinoza's geometrical method, likewise resulting into a '*concatenatio*' of the propositions? The reader's first impression is, of course, that Hume's intention with this remark is to refer him to the English experimental tradition of Bacon, Boyle and especially Newton. The latter's dictum '*Hypotheses non fingo*' was famous. Nevertheless the method of *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica* (1687) was purely geometrical. On the other hand was Spinoza a first class experimentator, whose axioms and propositions were, as he claimed, without exception based on experience. One ought to distinguish between, to say it in modern terminology, the context of discovery and the context of justification and didactical exposition.²⁷ When Robert Boyle had difficulties in understanding Spinoza's position he answered him in Letter 2 (Sept. 1661): "However, in order to provide a clear and concise proof, I can think of no better expedient than to arrange them in geometrical style and to submit them to the bar of your judgment".²⁸ In comparison the methodical remarks of our both authors don't imply a different methodology as regards the empirical basis of their philosophy.²⁹ The visual presentation of their results, however, is indeed incomparable and suggests an opposition.

But there is a third element of the title-page which asks for our attention. That is the lack of information concerning the author. Descartes did not hesitate to publish his main work, *Principia Philosophiae* (1644), under his own name. Hobbes' name shines on the beautifully ornate title-page of his great work *Leviathan* (1651). The same with the publications of Boyle, Berkeley, Malebranche and Newton.³⁰ But from Spinoza onwards, who published his works anonymously,³¹ we see a different tradition. Philosophers who found themselves in his line were anxious to hide their name: the *Principia Pantosophiae* (1684) of his 'best friend' A. Cuffeler, the *Medicina Mentis* (1687) of his friend and correspondent Tschirnhaus, the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and all other works of the 'secretive' John Locke who feared persecution because he subscribed to Spinoza's empiricism and consent-theory, and *The Fable of the Bees* and all other works by Bernard Mandeville, who likewise had to fight for his safety. All those authors drew their paradoxical and highly radical

²⁶ See the 'Advertisement'.

²⁷ Cf. Norwood Hanson, *Patterns of Discovery* (1958).

²⁸ See Spinoza, *The Letters*. Translated by Samuel Shirley. Introduction and notes by Steven Barbone, Lee Rice and Jacob Adler (Indianapolis: Hackett 1995) p. 62.

²⁹ See Wim Klever, "Spinoza's theory of Experience and Experiments", in E. Curley and P.-F. Moreau (eds), *Spinoza. Issues and Directions. The Proceedings of the Chicago Spinoza Conference* (Leiden: Brill 1990), p. 124-136.

³⁰ Bayle is not an exception because he officially 'refuted' Spinoza in a convincing way that was commonly mistaken as being authentic.

³¹ Apart from his innocuous commentary on *Principia Philosophiae Renati des Cartes* (1663). But already his intimate and 'paradoxical' forerunner Lodewijk Meyer published his *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres* (1665) anonymously.

theories from Spinoza and knew that they were on that account the target for political attacks. In spite of his ‘disingenuous’ (Richard Popkin) rejection of Spinoza’s ‘monstrous’ hypothesis Hume did not feel safe. In a letter of 13 February 1739 to Henry Home, Hume declared that, in the hope of securing impartial readers of his book, he had concealed his name: “though I believe I have not been so cautious in this respect as I ought to have been”.³² Why does he fear not to have been cautious enough? One might doubt the sincerity of this explanation.

5. *Science of man in the ‘Introduction’*

The *Treatise of Human Nature* is introduced as a ‘science of man’ in the strictest possible sense, on which even “Mathematics, Natural Philosophy and Natural Religion are in some measure dependent, since they lie under the cognizance of men, and are judged by their powers and faculties” (p. 42). ‘Natural philosophy’ is what we call today ‘physics’. ‘Natural religion’ might be an equivalent for ethics or ‘sociology’. “We in effect propose a compleat system of the sciences built on a foundation almost entirely new” (p. 43). This foundation is purely empirical, namely ‘experience and observation’. Locke and Mandeville are considered to be forerunners in putting ‘the science of man on a new footing’, as Hume annotated on the bottom of the page. The empirical bias does not exclude a deductive procedure in so far all effects have to be explained ‘from the simplest and fewest causes’ (p. 44). But never is it allowed to go beyond experience and explain phenomena by fancied and ‘freely swerving’ hypotheses.

Is the bold claim to offer a brand-new empirically founded super-science an innovation upon Spinoza? Much more than Hume’s *Treatise* is the *Ethica* a ‘science of everything’,³³ giving the principles of special sciences as the science of man. But it is true: just like Hume Spinoza is focused on a scientific treatment of human nature. The term ‘*scientia*’ covers what he is doing (1/33s2): explaining man’s actual behaviour from the most general physical principles and causes.³⁴ That is why he changed the original unspecific name of ‘his philosophy’ into ‘*Ethica*’ (= science of ‘*èthos*’).³⁵ His intention and his practice is a precise execution of Hume’s program. Or to say it the other way around: Hume’s program is a correct description of Spinoza’s practice.

As an example of ‘ultimate original qualities of human nature’ not justified by experience and observation and therefore to be rejected as ‘presumptuous and chimerical’, Hume mentions our hypothetical knowledge of the essence of our internal and external world. With this remark, which is neither his nor Spinoza’s last word on knowledge, he comes more than close to Spinoza as will appear from the following diagram.

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|---|---|
| For to me it seems evident, that the <i>essence of the mind being equally unknown to us</i> | Hence it follows that the human <i>mind</i> , whenever it <i>perceives a thing in the</i> |
|---|---|

³² I quote from P. Jones (ed.), *The Reception of David Hume in Europe* (London: Continuum 2005) p. 49.

³³ Compare Cuffeler’s title ‘*Pantosophia*’!

³⁴ References to places in the *Ethica* are by giving first the number of the book and adding after a slash the number of the proposition. The characters ‘d’, ‘s’, ‘c’ (eventually 1 or 2) indicate a demonstration, scholium or corollary. – Apart the from general axioms, definitions and propositions of part 1 Spinoza enumerates a series of physical principles after 2/13. Spinoza considered himself and was considered by contemporary scientists primarily as a mathematician and a physicist.

³⁵ For the first name, see *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* § 3, note: ‘postea in mea philosophia’. For the final name, see Letter 27: “magnum ethices partem, quae, ut cuivis notum metaphysica et physica fundari debet”.

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| <i>with that of external bodies</i> , it must be equally impossible to form any notion of its powers and qualities otherwise than from careful and exact experiments, and the <i>observation of those particular effects, which result from its different circumstances and situations</i> (Tr. p. 44). | <i>common order of nature</i> , has <i>no adequate knowledge of itself</i> , nor of its body, <i>nor of external bodies</i> , but only a confused and mutilated knowledge thereof. For the mind knows not itself save in so far as it perceives ideas of the modifications of the body (2/29c; p. 63). ³⁶ |
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It is interesting that we find already in Hume's bravado about his originality a crypto-quotation from Spinoza's text. Neither for Hume nor for Spinoza this will be the last word about the question. That Hume will certainly surpass the phenomenal level of our cognitive acquaintance with mind and bodies is already implied in his sharing Spinoza's anything but modest indication of the contents of *Ethica*, part 2 in its title:

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| ... to explain the <i>nature and principles of the human mind</i> (Tr. 1.1.2; p. 55). | <i>De natura et origine mentis</i> (Concerning the nature and origin of the mind, p. 38). |
|---|---|

He also takes over Spinoza's '*origine*' in the title of part 1.1 and section 1.1.1: 'Of the Origin of our Ideas'. Yes, he is not very cautious in hiding the source of his inspiration.

6. Empirical origin of our ideas

This is by far the greatest discovery and renewal in the history of European philosophy, traditionally mainly ascribed to the Englishman Locke and the Scot Hume - to pass in silence the trumpeters Bacon and Boyle -, but not less, yea even first and above all, proposed and demonstrated by Spinoza, who by official historiography up till now was totally misconceived as an outstanding rationalist in the line of Descartes and Leibniz.

The very first page of the young philosopher in France successfully *paraphrase* Spinoza's starting point in *Ethica* 2, as given in his axioms.

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| <i>All the perceptions of the human mind</i> resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS ... I believe it will not be very necessary to employ many words in explaining this distinction. Every one of himself will readily perceive the difference betwixt feeling and thinking (Tr. 1.1.1; p. 49) | IV. We sense that a certain body is affected in many ways. V. We <i>neither sense nor perceive</i> any particular things <i>save</i> bodies and modes of thinking. III. The modes of thinking, such as love, desire, or whatever emotions of the mind are distinguished by name, do not exist unless an <i>idea</i> in the same individual exists of the thing loved, desired etc. (2/axioms) |
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In the italicized 'all the perceptions of the mind' Hume translates Spinoza's emphatic '*nullas res [...] praeter[...] percipimus*'. Object of our perceptions are either bodies or thoughts: two

³⁶Fragments of the quotes are italicized by this author in order to give prominence to common elements of the left and right quote. In this case : a) no knowledge of the essence of mind and external bodies / no adequate knowledge; and b) on empirical basis, i.e. by observation of various circumstances / by repeated perception of the things in the ordinary course of nature. - Quotes from the *Ethica* are henceforth according to the translation of G. H. R. Parkinson (London: Everymans Library 1989).

kinds according to both. ‘Impression’ and ‘feeling’ are Hume’s choices for Spinoza’s ‘sensed affections’ of (parts of) our body. I added Spinoza’s third axiom to the table because this axiom presents the word ‘idea’ as equivalent for Hume’s original ‘thinking’, which word reminds of Spinoza’s ‘mode of thinking’. The sharpest detective would not be able to discover a difference between the messages of the two columns.

More important than this parallelism between them is that both authors emphasize that the second kind of our perceptions (ideas /modes of thinking) is narrowly related to the first kind of our perceptions, not only in this sense that they are qua content exactly correspondent but also because the first kind of our perceptions is the exclusive object of the second kind of our perceptions. Whatever we think, we think nothing but what we feel. In other words: whatever we sense is thought about or reflected. In fact this means that “all the perceptions of the mind are double, and appear both as impressions and ideas” (p. 50). The proofs for this strict correspondence are ‘obvious, numerous and conclusive’ (p. 52). The duplicity of our perceptions means that we *at once* (in one act) perceive body and mind, matter and thinking, or to say it in non-Humean but only Spinozistic terms: we know two attributes of God.

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| From this constant conjunction of resembling perceptions I immediately conclude, that there is a great <i>connexion</i> betwixt our correspondent impressions and ideas, and that the existence of the one has a considerable influence upon that of the other. Such a constant conjunction in such an infinite number of instances, can never arise from chance. ... That I may know on which side the dependence lies, I consider the <i>order</i> of their first appearance (Tr. p. 52). | The <i>order</i> and <i>connection</i> of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things (2/7). The object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body or a certain mode of extension, and nothing else (2/13). The human mind perceives no external body as actually existing save through ideas of modifications of its body” (2/26). |
|---|--|

The selected fragments from Spinoza lie certainly on the background of Hume’s text, but they require to be attentively read in combination with each other. The ‘things’ of 2/7 are the ‘sensed things’ of axioms 3 and 4, i.e. the modifications of our body as explained in 2/13 and 2/26. The felt affections or modifications of our body are in Hume’s terminology our impressions.³⁷ Their order and connection is exactly reflected in the order and connection of our ideas, our thinking.³⁸ It is more than remarkable that Hume adopts the *two* words ‘order’ and ‘connexion’ from Spinoza’s capital proposition 2/7. No wonder that he also qualifies his paraphrase as his ‘general *proposition*’ (p. 52). “This then is the first principle I establish in

³⁷ In *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, no.12-13 (p. 18-19) the exclusive source of ‘all the material of thinking’ is alternatively called ‘sensations or movements’ and “outward or inward sentiment’. Hume’s terminology is not stable. - Henceforth I will indicate this work with EHU and quote from the second edition by L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford Clarendon Pr. 1972).

³⁸ Hume’s reproach to Locke (in footnote) that he ‘perverts’ philosophical terminology by using the word ‘idea’ also for ‘sensation’/ ‘impression’ has sense but does not allow the conclusion that he puts himself on other empirical ground than Locke, himself an adept of Spinoza in his consequent rejection of innate and other not experience related ideas. Cf. Hume’s subtle reference to Locke’s *Essay*, book 1 at the end of *Treatise* 1.1.1.

the science of human nature” (p. 54). Also in Spinoza *Ethica* 2/7 and its variations was absolutely central in his system and most frequently referred to in subsequent deductions.³⁹ Complete coordination between mind and its thus-or-so affected body surpasses epistemology and has direct effects on our concept of human nature. This becomes more than clear in Hume’s *Essay Of the Immortality of the Soul*, which provides an impressive application of the principle which fully joins Spinoza’s conclusion in his early *Korte Verhandelng* (1661).

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| <p>Where any two objects are so closely connected, that alterations, which we have ever seen in the one, are attended with <i>proportionable</i> alterations in the other; we ought to conclude, by all rules of analogy, that, where there are still greater alterations produced in the former, and it is totally dissolved, there follows a <i>total dissolution</i> of the latter.</p> <p>Sleep, a very small effect on the body, is attended with a temporary extinction; at least, a great confusion in the soul.</p> <p>The weakness of the body and that of the mind in infancy are exactly proportioned; their vigor in manhood; their sympathetic disorder in sickness; their common gradual decay in old age. The step farther seems unavoidable; their common dissolution in death.</p> <p>The last symptoms, which the mind discovers, are disorder, weakness, insensibility, stupidity, the forerunners of its annihilation [...] <i>Everything is in common between soul and body..</i> [...] The want of arguments, without revelation, sufficiently establishes the negative [concerning the immortality of the soul].⁴⁰</p> | <p>11.... For as the body is, so is the soul, idea, knowledge etc. (<i>want zoo het lichaam is, zoo is de ziel, idea, kennis etc.</i>)</p> <p>12. So if such a body has and preserves its proportion – say of 1 to 3 – the soul and the body will be like ours now are. They will, of course, be constantly subject to change, but not to such a great change that it goes beyond the limits of from 1 to 3 and as much it changes, so also the soul changes each time.</p> <p>13. And this change, which arises in us from the fact that other bodies act on ours, cannot occur without the soul’s becoming aware of it, since it, too, changes constantly. And this change [i.e. in the soul] is really what we call sensation (<i>gevoel</i>).</p> <p>14. But if other bodies act on ours with such force that the proportion of motion to rest cannot remain 1 to 3, that is <i>death, and a destruction of the soul, in so far as it is only an idea, knowledge etc. of a body</i> having this proportion of motion and rest (KV, pref.).⁴¹</p> |
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Ethica 2/7₅ explains the coordinated processes in our body and mind as an identity in various ways perceived: “Thus also the mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways”. Thus far and in that way Hume does not follow him explicitly, although his *Essay*-quote above does presuppose it. In his more systematic work he confines himself to the statement, that there is “a kind of pre-

³⁹ See Jon Wetlesen, *Internal guide to the Ethics of Spinoza. Index to Spinoza’s cross references* (Oslo, Filosofisk Institutt 1974).

⁴⁰ *Essays*, o.c. p. 596.

⁴¹ Translation of Edwin Curley in his *The Collected Works of Spinoza, edited and translated* (Princeton University Press, volume 1, 1985) p. 96.

established harmony between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas".⁴² By 'course of nature' has to be understood the 'experienced' course of nature, i.e. our body as it is affected and felt.⁴³

But there is still a surprise at the end of section 1.1.1. Ideas were circumscribed by Hume as "exact representations of the impressions" (p. 50), which means that the impressions are the *objects* of our ideas, just like Spinoza asserted in axioms 4 and 5, propositions 2/13 and 2/26. But the first sentence of 1.1.1 shows that also the ideas themselves are objects of the mind's perception. This is not a slip of his pen. Ideas replicate themselves in secondary ideas, which are the 'images' of the primary ideas, as Hume explicitly teaches in the tail of this section. "Ideas *produce* the images of themselves in new ideas" (p. 54). The secondary or tertiary (etc.) ideas which explain the primary or secondary (etc.) ideas, will never stop keeping a relation to the impressions. Before writing this Hume must have been struck by the fascinating series of propositions 19-21 and the subsequent scholium. The mind knows herself via her ideas of the affections of her body (pr.19). There is (in God) an idea of this knowledge or idea (pr. 20). And this secondary idea is exactly coupled to the primary idea as this primary idea is coupled to the body (pr. 21). I adapted in my rephrasing Spinoza's words to Hume's terminology. The final sentence of the scholium must have been an eye-opener for Hume. "For in truth the idea of the mind, that is the idea of an idea (*idea ideae*), is nothing else than the form (*forma*) of an idea in so far as it is considered as a mode of thinking without relation to its object: for if a man knows anything, by that very fact he knows he knows it, and at the same time knows that he knows that he knows it, and so on to infinity" (o.c. p. 59). The light of an idea can never stop reverberating and 'understand' itself better and better in a continuing process.

7. Externally determined origin of our passions

"Impressions may be divided into two kinds, those of *sensation* and those of *reflexion*". This sentence of 1.1.2 is a clear parallel to the first sentence of 1.1.1. As perceptions are divided into two kinds, so also impressions. The distinction Hume tries to define here, mirrors certainly Spinoza's fundamental distinction between what he calls '*affectio*', from which in his text the verbs '*afficere*' (the active form: 'to affect') and '*affici*' (the passive: 'to be affected') are derived, and '*affectus*', which is the physico-psychical effect of the affections of our body.⁴⁴ Because Spinoza does not give an explicit definition of *affectio* c.q. *afficere* or *affici* the table hereafter cannot be in perfect equilibrium.

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| The first kind [impressions of sensation] arises in the soul originally <i>from unknown causes</i> " (Tr. p. 55). "The examination of our sensations belongs more to the anatomists | The individuals composing the human body, and consequently the human body itself is <i>affected</i> in many ways by external bodies" (Postulate 3 after 2/13; p. 53). "The ideas of |
|---|---|

⁴² ECHU, no. 44, p. 54. The terminology betrays, it seems, some (!) influence of Leibniz. But Hume protects himself against theology by adding 'a kind of'.

⁴³ Cf. *Essays*, o.c. p. 598.

⁴⁴ See E. Giancotti Boscherini, *Lexicon Spinozanum* (The Hague: Nijhoff 1970) for the various occurrences of the terms: 4 pages for *affection* and 11 pages for *affectus*. Many translators don't enough distinguish between their equivalents for the different meanings of the respective terms.

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| and natural philosophers than to the moral" (Tr. p. 55). ⁴⁵ "The second is <i>derived in a great measure from our ideas</i> [...] Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind [...] This idea of pleasure or pain [etc.] produces the new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflexion, because derived from it (Tr. p. 55). | these modifications [<i>affectionum</i>] ... are <i>like consequences without premises</i> (2/28s; p. 62). An emotion (<i>affectus</i>) is a <i>confused idea wherewith the mind</i> affirms a greater or less power of existing of the body or of any part of it than before, and which being given, the mind is thereby determined to think of one thing rather than of another (3/def.; p. 140). |
|---|--|

Spinoza's rather complicated final definition in *Ethica* 3 indicates nothing else than what Hume means by his mental attitudes of 'desire, aversion, hope and fear'. The definition summarizes in a general formula the 48 definitions of the various passions and emotions he had given just before this general one. Both authors accentuate that our emotions are in fact physico-psychical *reactions* on what happens in our body and was at once perceived as pleasure or pain. The *affectus* or 'impressions of the reflexion' cannot deviate from the order of the impressions and arise automatically in our mind, a thing which is quite originally expressed by Hume's metaphorical expression 'a copy is taken of the impression'. The copying process initiated by the first kind of impressions is not yet finished with the impressions of the reflexion. Together they constitute our mind or more specifically its hard disc, the memory. Hume follows Locke who in his turn described the process in Spinoza's trace. In the *Essay's* chapter on '*Retention*' Locke wrote about the soul as a 'storehouse of our ideas' (2.10.2) exactly corresponding to the body as a 'repository' of codes.⁴⁶ The imagination would be able to freely combine and transpose ideas, e.g. to 'winged horses', "while the memory is in a manner ty'd down in that respect, without any power of variation" (*Treatise* 1.1.3'p. 56). It is not up to us which impressions we keep in our brain and which not, since the ideas of our mind are always 'representations of the impressions'. The mind has to be conceived "as an equal mirror to the rays of the universe", as Spinoza intimated in his first letter to Oldenburg (Letter 2).

8. Custom and association of ideas

In his enthusiasm the young Hume assumed propitiously that our imagination is *not* tied to the order of our original impressions (1.1.3; p. 56). But he had soon (in his next section) to retreat from this supposition. We *imagine* our environment precisely according to the history of the modifications of our body by external impacts. We now touch on Hume's so called major discovery: "The qualities, from which this association [by which one idea naturally introduces another] arises, and by which the mind is after this manner convey'd from one idea to another, are three, viz. *resemblance*, *contiguity* in time or place and *cause and effect*" (1.1.4; p. 58). In all three cases we are '*necessitated*' to the coupling of ideas; we cannot escape it. Where things are experienced as being like each other or bordering to each other or following regularly upon each other, we cannot help it to associate them or to

⁴⁵ The Postulate 3 (see table on other side) was in Spinoza's text part of a small and very rudimentary physical and physiological *excursion* after 2/13. Also Locke refrains in the same context of giving detailed information on "the natural causes and manner of perception". See his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 2.8.4.

⁴⁶ Cf. Wim Klever, *John Locke*, o.c. p. 30.

see them ‘by long custom’ in a causal relation. “These are the principles of union or cohesion among our simple ideas” (p. 60). Hume is seemingly proud on their formulation. However, it is demonstrable that he literally ‘re-presents’ Spinoza in spite of his claim on perfect originality. Let us try to put quotes next to each other, although it is again difficult to arrange them properly. The decisive words are italicized.

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| <p>It is evident that there is a principle of connexion between the different thoughts or ideas of the mind, and that, in their appearance to the <i>memory</i> or imagination, they introduce each other with a certain degree of method and regularity (EHU 3.18; p. 23).</p> <p>We are determined <i>by custom alone</i> to expect the one from the appearance of the other (EHU 5.36; p. 43).</p> <p>[Concerning originality claim:] Though it be too obvious, that different ideas are connected together; I do not find that any philosopher has attempted to enumerate or class all the principles of <i>association</i> [...] To me there appear to be only three principles of connexion among ideas, namely <i>resemblance</i>, <i>contiguity</i> in time or place, and <i>cause or effect</i> (EHU 3.19; p. 24).⁴⁷</p> <p>A <i>picture</i> 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 (ib.).</p> | <p>If the human body has been once affected <i>at the same time</i> by two or more bodies, when the mind afterwards remembers any one of them it will straightway remember the others (2/18).</p> <p>Hence we clearly understand what is <i>memory</i>. For it is nothing else than a certain <i>concatenation</i> of ideas involving the nature of things which are outside the human body, and this [‘association’, wk] takes place in the mind according to the order and concatenation of the modifications of the human body (2/18s).</p> <p>[When a soldier or a farmer sees hoof prints in the sand:] Thus each one according to how he is <i>accustomed</i> to unite and link the images of things in this or that way will fall (<i>incidet</i>) from the thought of one thing to the thought of another”(ib.).</p> <p>“So, too, the law that a man in remembering one thing, straightway remembers another either <i>like it</i>, or which he had perceived <i>simultaneously</i> with it, is a law which necessarily follows from the nature of man (TTP 4; p. 57).</p> |
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Hume’s examples cover the three mentioned parameters. Resemblance and contiguity in time are illustrated by Spinoza in TTP 4. Contiguity of place is only an instance of contiguity of time in complex ideas and is therefore not mentioned separately. His illustration of 2/18 is at once an example of likeness (between figure of hoof and hoofprint) and of cause and effect. A footprint in the sand is a sign that a man or woman has walked there. Further he emphasizes like Hume that it is only by custom that we link man and footprint as cause and effect.⁴⁸ And lastly he stresses in the same passage three times that we cannot forbear ‘*falling*’ from the one upon the other when they are similar figures or a regular sequence.

⁴⁷ Spinoza’s ‘*visis in arena equi vestigiis*’ made impression on Hume’s mind too. See EHU no. 111: “If you saw upon the sea-shore the print of one human foot ...”!

⁴⁸ The absolutely dominating and all pervasive influence of custom for our behaviour is asserted in 3/df 27: “For custom (*consuetudo*) and religion are not the same to all but on the contrary, what is sacred to some is profane to others, and what is honourable to some is disgraceful to others. Therefore, according as each has been educated, so he repents of or glories in his actions” (p. 114).

The concatenation of ideas is 1 to 1 and unbreakably coupled to the sequence of modifications in our body, as Spinoza so marvellously formulates in the first quote of 2/18s. 'Association' is certainly Hume's equivalent for Spinoza's 'concatenatio'.

9. Nominalism

Since ideas reflect impressions, which are always particular and different, it must be impossible to have general ideas. "The image in the mind is *only* that of a particular object" (p. 67).⁴⁹ Names may, of course, indicate a plurality of various things, ideas not. This is not a new position in the history of philosophy, but Spinoza's, Locke's and Hume's arguments for nominalism certainly were new on account of their strong anti-dualistic and anti-Cartesian view on the unity of man's mind and body. It is interesting and probably not accidental that the three modern philosophers exemplify their argument with the same reference to our concept of man. It is true that Hume ranges himself explicitly and safely under the flag of Berkeley, the undisputed adversary of Spinoza, and ascribes to him "one of the greatest and most valuable discoveries that has been made of late years in the republic of letters", which he tries to confirm (p. 64). But also Berkeley was not like Athena born virginally from Zeus' head. He knew everything about the new start taken by Spinoza.⁵⁰

| <i>Spinoza</i> | <i>Locke</i> | <i>Hume</i> |
|---|--|--|
| The mind can imagine distinctly as many bodies as images can be formed in its body at the same time. But when the images become quite confused in the body, the mind also imagines all bodies confusedly without any distinction [...] The so called universal concepts [...] cannot imagine the small differences between individuals (e.g. colour, size, etc.) and their fixed number [...] The notions are not formed by all in the same manner [...] For example, those who have most often admired <i>men</i> for their stature, by the name of man will understand an animal of | But it is beyond the power of human capacity to frame and retain distinct ideas of all the particular things we meet with" (ECHU 3.3.2). "It is evident that it is their own collections of sensible qualities that men make the essences of their several sort of substances [...] For if we will examine it, we shall not find the nominal essence at any one species of substances in all men the same; no not of that which of all others we are the most intimately acquainted with. It could not possibly be that the abstract idea to which the name <i>man</i> is given should be different in several | All general ideas are nothing but particular ones" (Berkeley confirmed by Hume, Tr. 1.1.7; p. 64). "The abstract idea of a <i>man</i> represents men <i>of all sizes and al qualities</i> [...]. The image in the mind is only that of a particular object, tho' the application of it in our reasoning be the same as if it were a universal [...] We apply the same name to all of them [...] The hearing of the name revives the idea of one of these objects, and makes the imagination conceive it with all its particular circumstances and proportions" (Tr. p. 67-68). "impossibility of general |

⁴⁹ My italics.

⁵⁰ For Berkeley's sharp opposition to Spinoza see *Alciphron* (1732), Dialogue 2. p. 568 in A. A. Luce & T. E. Jessop, *The Works of George Berkeley* (Klaus reprint 1979). A. D. Woozley in his article "Universals" (P. Edwards, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 8, 1967) contests the originality of Berkeley's nominalism, which he would have drawn as a nearly verbatim quote from Locke. "And Hume's enthusiastic comment that Berkeley's view of general ideas as particular ideas *used* generally is 'one of the greatest and most valuable discoveries that has been made of late years in the republic of letters', does Hume little credit. His examination of Locke was clearly no more thorough than Berkeley's had been" (p. 201).

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| <i>erect stature</i> ; those who are wont to regard men in another way will form another common image of men, namely a laughing animal, a featherless <i>biped animal</i> , a <i>reasoning animal</i> , and so each one will form concerning the other things universal images of things according to the disposition of his body(2/40s1; p. 68-9). | men, if it were of nature's making, and that to the one it should be <i>animal rationale</i> , and to another <i>animal implume bipes latis unguibus</i> [...] I think there is scarce anyone will allow this <i>upright figure</i> ... to be the essential difference of the species man... (<i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> 3.6.26) | ideas (Tr. p. 71). A general idea, tho' it be nothing but a particular one consider'd in a certain view, is commonly more obscure (Tr. 2.3.6; p. 472). |
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Whoever carefully studies and meditates the quoted fragments, cannot doubt that there is a line of influence from Spinoza, eventually via Locke and Berkeley, to Hume. Their rejection of general ideas rest on the same foundation and is explained in the same way. The details of the example 'man' that were common to Spinoza and Locke, are summarized by Hume in his 'all sizes and qualities'.⁵¹

10. Three kinds of knowledge

In section 6 I reminded the reader of the fact that empiricism is not Spinoza's neither Hume's last word on knowledge. Empiricism is indeed the exclusive source of knowledge. Knowledge originates as particular ideas of particular impressions and has as such not the least universal validity. This was the upshot of nominalism. Nevertheless there is a way out of, or better: 'up from', this empirical prison of the mind. And Spinoza's so well as Hume's solemn declaration about the impossibility to know the essence of things has to be partly withdrawn. The absolutely common elements of our always privately coloured pictures and reflections of reality can never be denied as being irrelevant or inadequate, just as also their internal relations of opposition and proportion must be universally applicable without any condition. Again we have to frame a threefold division because Locke will probably have played an intermediary role at the birth of Hume's philosophy. In the following two frames I will first present the *key*-text for the division of kinds of knowledge and then their appellation. One ought to realize that for all three our primary ideas (sense data) are double in this point that they, apart from the impressions felt, are their own object and we exactly on account of this duplicity cannot but discover their agreement and partial or total disagreement.

| <i>Spinoza</i> | <i>Locke</i> | <i>Hume</i> |
|---|---|---|
| I say expressly that the mind has no adequate but only confused knowledge of itself, of its body, and of external bodies, when it | he will be in a capacity to know the truth of ... maxims upon the first occasion that shall make him put together those ideas [of sensation] in | All certainty arises from the comparison of ideas, and from the discovery of such relations as are unalterable. These relations are |

⁵¹ See also Lee Rice, "Autour de l'éthique de Spinoza et de Hume", o.c. p. 99: "La question du nominalisme ... est une d'un grand nombre de considérations où Spinoza et Hume se trouvent en accord parfait et unanime. Pour l'un comme pour l'autre ce qui existe, ce sont les individus: les objets dits 'universels' ne sont pas moins des fictions pour Spinoza que pour Hume".

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| perceives a thing in the common order of nature, that is, whenever it is determined externally, that is, by fortuitous circumstances, to contemplate this or that, and not when it is determined internally, that is, by the fact that it <i>regards</i> at once (<i>contemplatur</i>) many things, to understand their <i>agreements, differences, and oppositions (oppugnantias)</i> one to another. For whenever it is disposed in this or any other way from within, then it regards things clearly and distinctly (2/29s; p. 63). | his mind and observe whether they <i>agree or disagree</i> (ECHU 1.2.16). Since the mind in all its thoughts and reasonings, hath no other immediate object but its own ideas, which it alone does or can <i>contemplate</i> , it is evident that our knowledge is only conversant about them. Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the <i>connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnance</i> of any of our ideas (ECHU 4.1.1-2). | <i>resemblance, proportions</i> in quantity and degrees in any quality and <i>contrariety</i> (Tr. 1.3.3; p. 126). Wherever ideas are adequate representations of objects, the <i>relations, contradictions and agreements</i> of the ideas are all applicable to the objects and this we may in general observe to be the foundation of all human knowledge (Tr. 1.2.2; p. 78). |
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One must be blind and ignorant or unwilling and prejudiced⁵² for not to be surprised by the full agreement between the parallel columns. That Locke was in this respect dependent upon Spinoza was already subject of a heavy reproach of Spinozism by bishop Stillingfleet.⁵³ The young Hume does not claim patent for his definition of adequate knowledge. The cheat would have been too obvious for insiders.

After his description of the empirical bottom of our knowledge and his definition of certain knowledge we quite naturally expect Hume to draw the conclusion that we have two kinds of knowledge. But in fact he splits the latter member into two. That was also done so by Spinoza and Locke. Concerning Spinoza it must be said that his distinction between three kinds (*genera*) of knowledge was extremely fundamental in his system and appeared already in his early and only privately communicated *Korte Verhandeling* as well as his unfinished and posthumously published *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*. In the fragment quoted hereafter the first or lowest kind is subdivided.

| <i>Spinoza</i> | <i>Locke</i> | <i>Hume</i> |
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| From all that has been said above it is now clearly apparent that we perceive many things and form | Of the degrees of our knowledge" (chapter 4.2). 'kinds' (4..2.1); 'sorts' (4.2.14) of knowledge. | All the objects of human reason or enquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds, to wit, <i>Relations of</i> |

⁵² The traditional praise for the great period of British Enlightenment as against continental rationalism may have been a reason.

⁵³ See my *John Locke*, o.c. p. 35. Locke protested disingenuously: "Nobody that I ever met with had in their writings particularly set down wherein the act of knowing precisely consisted". Scholars (like H. A. S Shamkula) agree that it was not of Cartesian origin. I think that this writer (wk) is the first to point to the real origin.

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| <p>universal notions, first [A¹] from particular things represented to our intellect mutilated, confused and without order [...] and therefore we are wont to call such perceptions knowledge from uncertain experience. Second [A²], from signs, from the fact that we remember certain things through having read or heard certain words and form certain ideas of them similar to those through which we imagine things. Both of these ways of regarding things I shall call hereafter knowledge of the first kind, opinion (<i>opinion</i>) or imagination (<i>imagination</i>). Third [B], from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things... And I shall call this reason (<i>ratio</i>), and knowledge of the second kind. Besides these two kinds of knowledge there is a third, as I shall show in what follows, which we shall call intuitive knowledge (<i>scientia intuitiva</i>) [C] (2/40s2; p. 69).</p> | <p>“These two, viz. intuition and demonstration [C & B] are the degrees of our knowledge; whatever comes short of one of these, with what assurance soever embraced, is but faith or <i>opinion</i> [A] but not knowledge. There is, indeed, another perception of the mind, employed about the particular existence of finite beings without us, which, going beyond bare probability and yet not reaching perfectly to either of the foregoing degrees of certainty, passes under the name of knowledge (ECHU 4.2.14; p. 143). ... <i>three degrees of knowledge</i>, viz. <i>intuitive</i> [C], <i>demonstrative</i> [B] and <i>sensitive</i> [A] (ECHU 4.2.14; p. 144).</p> | <p><i>Ideas</i> [C & B], and <i>Matters of Fact</i> [A].⁵⁴ Of the first kind are the sciences of Geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic; and in short every affirmation, which is either <i>intuitively</i> [C] or <i>demonstratively</i> [B] certain.... Propositions of this kind are discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe” (EHU 4.20; p. 25). ... mark the several <i>degrees of evidence</i>, to distinguish human reason into <i>three kinds</i>, viz. that from <i>knowledge</i> [C], from <i>proofs</i> [B], and from <i>probabilities</i> [A]. By knowledge I mean the assurance arising from the comparison of ideas. By proofs, those arguments, which are deriv’d 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 uncertainty (Tr. 1.3.11; p. 175).</p> |
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The congruence is undeniable and cannot be overseen. Yet, there is a problem. Hume seems to make a mistake in the *Treatise*, which he afterwards corrects in the *Enquiry*. ‘Cause and effect’ does not belong to the second category; causal relations can never be demonstrated. But he is right in saying that ‘cause and effect’ is free from doubt and uncertainty. This, however, is the case with all matters of fact. They are probable, because counterevidence fails. An idea (about a matter of fact) can only become certain on account of convergence with other items, i. e. as part of a network or a system. Its opposite might have been the case and can be thought, which makes the persuasion rather weak. And contrary experience that comes up in our mind, will indeed make us hesitate and doubt.

⁵⁴ The order of enumeration of the three kinds of knowledge is in Locke and Hume the reverse of Spinoza’s order. I keep to the numbering from the low degree (A) via reasoning (B) to intuition (C).

It is more than remarkable that Hume, like also Locke before him, makes use of Spinoza's favourite choice '*intuition*' as the name for our highest kind of knowledge. A better term cannot be found to indicate our unavoidable *seeing* of the coincidence, yes or no, between various reflected and therefore conscious impressions (sc. of external objects). They also both join him by calling the *mediated* connecting of those ideas a 'demonstration' or a 'proof', which words also frequently occur in Spinoza's 'geometrical demonstrations'. In the quoted passage he affirms that by this procedure we acquire adequate ideas of the common notions and properties and that this constitutes our second kind of knowledge, namely our '*ratio*'. His theory of 'common notions' is not totally absent from Hume's treatise. In Tr. 2.1.10 (p. 363) he writes: "But according to common notions a man has no power to...".⁵⁵ The lowest degree of knowledge is given different synonyms by our compared authors: '*opinio*' or '*imaginatio*' by Spinoza,⁵⁶ '*belief*', '*assent*' or '*opinion*' by Locke,⁵⁷ '*belief*' or '*imaginatio*' by Hume. This kind of knowledge is an actually undoubted mental acceptance of a such or so qualified situation or relation. In his illustration of this empirical basis of our knowledge Hume retakes *three* of Spinoza's examples and emphasizes with Spinoza its really being knowledge!

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| Why is it <i>more than probable</i> , that <i>all men must die</i> , that lead cannot, of itself, remain suspended in the air, <i>fire consumes</i> wood, and <i>is extinguished by water</i> , unless it be, that these events are found agreeable to the laws of nature, and there is required a violation of these laws, or in other words a miracle to prevent them? (EHU 1.90; p. 114). | By random experience I <i>know</i> that I <i>shall die</i> , for I affirm this because I have seen others like me die, even though they had not all lived the same length of time and did not all die of the same illness. Again, I also know by random experience that <i>oil is capable of feeding fire</i> , and that <i>water is capable of putting it out</i> ...And in this way I know almost all the things that are useful in life (TIE § 20; p. 14). ⁵⁸ |
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The four common elements in this couple of parallel passages is more than enough to persuade us again that Spinoza is Hume's source. The whole section on the kinds / degrees of knowledge would in our time be called plagiarism.

11. *Belief in cause-effect relations and the causality maxim*

Acts of belief on the basis of ordinary experience are not infected by doubt or hesitation; in this respect they don't differ from intellectual insights or conclusions of a reasoning process. Believers don't question the (so or so imagined) existence of what they believe: they on the contrary acknowledge the existence of the objects of their belief. There is no distance

⁵⁵ The ideas we acquire by comparison are according to Hume "adequate representations of the most minute parts of extension; and thro' whatever divisions and subdivisions we may suppose these parts to be arriv'd at, they can never become inferior to some ideas, which we form" (Tr. 1.2.2; p. 78). This is more than close to what Spinoza prefers to call 'common notions' of 'common parts'. See 2/37-38.

⁵⁶ See *Ethica* 2/17s: "Again, to retain the usual phraseology, the modifications of the human body, the ideas of which represent to us external bodies as if they were present, we shall call the images (*imagines*) of things, although they do not reproduce the shapes of things; and when the mind regards bodies in this manner we say it imagines (*imaginatur*) them" (p. 56).

⁵⁷ See my *John Locke*, o.c. p. 58.

⁵⁸ The *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* (= TIE) is quoted according to the translation of E. Curley in *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, o.c.

between knowing x and affirming its existence. Descartes with his advice for methodically doubting propositions, which we normally consider mathematically certain, asked for an impossibility. We can never escape “the universe of our imagination” (Tr. 1.2.4; p. 116) nor can we refrain our adhesion to what we understand as a truth. The world of our understanding is not less a prison in the Platonic sense than the world of our imagination.⁵⁹

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| <p>There is no impression nor idea of any kind, of which we have any consciousness or memory, that is not conceiv'd as existent; and 'tis evident, that from this consciousness the most perfect idea and assurance of <i>being</i> is deriv'd [...] The idea of existence, then, is the very same with the idea of what we conceive to be existent[...]Whatever we conceive, we conceive to be existent (Tr. 1.2.4; p. 115).</p> | <p>However we have acquired an idea [of god or a triangle, wk], it will suffice to remove all doubt”(PPC, proleg.; p. 238).⁶⁰ There is in the mind no volition or affirmation and negation save that which the idea, in so far as it is an idea, involves (E. 2/49).⁶¹ If the human body is affected in a way which involves the nature of any external body, the human mind will regard that external body as actually existing, or as present to itself until the body is affected by a modification which cuts off the existence or presence of that body (E 2/17).</p> |
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But we philosophers judge, of course, that we hit reality in intuition and demonstration and miss reality in our acts of loose belief and unconfirmed imagination, which are not bound in a scientific network. It is only in this latter case that we can speak of hallucination. Seeing blue and feeling hot we project in reality colour and temperature, whereas blue and hot are only impressions of our body without a reality equivalent in the sense of a resemblance. The sky is not blue and the air is not hot. Whereas the so called ‘secondary qualities’ are already illusive, this is even more the case when they arise from our memory in later periods as an effect of their connexion with other impressions in our body, which are then activated by new experiences which have not the same relations. In that case there does not at all correspond any reality to our belief. This explication of hallucination is Spinoza’s counterpart and confirmation of Hume’s unconditional denial of any believing a thing without believing it to be existent.

As already hinted at in section 6: our belief in concrete causal relations is effectuated by custom and association of ideas. The constant succession of impression B on impression A makes us believe that A causes B. It is impossible for humans to think otherwise. Again: we cannot escape the universe of our imagination. This implies that our knowledge of causal relations is of the lowest category. We have neither intuitive nor demonstrative knowledge

⁵⁹ Cf. Plato’s *Republic*, book 6.

⁶⁰ *Principia Philosophiae Renati des Cartes* (= PPC), quoted from E. Curley’s translation: *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, o.c. p. 238. The quote is drawn from the ‘prolegomenon’ of this work, which is a sharp refutation of Descartes’ *Meditationes*.

⁶¹ This proposition implies not only that we cannot affirm something without having an idea of it, but also the reverse, namely that we cannot have an idea of something without affirming it. This implication is separately formulated in its corollary: “Will and intellect are one and the same” (p. 77). E 2/49 is frontally anti/Cartesian.

of concrete causal relations. This theory would have been the great innovation of Hume in the history of philosophy. This would also make him a representative of scepticism. But Hume was certainly not the first in denying scientific knowledge of concrete causal relations; Spinoza was the first and was not at all ambiguous on this point. It is regrettable and reproachable that historians of philosophy were bad readers of Spinoza's text. "Let us add that as to the actual co-ordination and concatenation of things, that is how things are ordained and linked together, we are obviously ignorant (*plane ignoramus*)" (TTP 4/4; p. 58).

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| <p>The vulgar, who take things according to their first appearance, attribute the uncertainty of events to [...] an uncertainty in the causes[...] But philosophers observing that almost in every part of nature there is contain'd <i>a vast variety of springs and principles</i>, which are hid, by reason of their minuteness or remoteness, find that it is at least possible the contrariety of events may not proceed from any contingency in the cause, but from the secret operation of contrary causes. This possibility is converted into certainty by farther observation, when they remark that upon an exact scrutiny, a contrariety of effects always betrays a contrariety of causes(Tr. 1.3.12; p. 182).</p> | <p>For it would be impossible for human weakness to grasp the series of singular, changeable things, not only because there are innumerable many of them, but also because of the <i>infinite circumstances</i> in one and the same thing, any of which can be <i>the cause</i> of its existence or nonexistence (TIE § 100; p. 41). For it is by reason and calculation that we divide bodies to <i>infinity</i>, and consequently also the <i>forces required to move them</i> (Letter 6; p. 79).</p> |
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The two quotes are drawn from different contexts and don't run totally parallel. But they both emphasize that the causes or springs of any thing are innumerable, which makes it impossible to indicate with certainty the real and adequate cause or principle. An empirical proof for A being the cause of B can never be conclusive according to Spinoza and acquire a scientific stamp. Hume seems to follow him wholeheartedly. We only reach probability in so far no contra evidence plumps up in the course of nature, i.e. in so far there does not appear some irregularity in the sequence of our impressions. "All our reasonings concerning the probability of causes [i.e. that x is the cause of y, wk] are founded on the transferring of past to future" (Tr. 1.3.12; p. 188). "We never are able, in a single instance, to discover any power or necessary connexion [...] We only find, that the one does actually, in fact, follow the other. The impulse of one billiard-ball is attended with motion in the second" (EHU 7.50; p. 63). We do believe the causal relation in question because we always experienced it like that.

The Hume quote in the table above betrays, apart from Hume's rejecting the possibility of causal explanation in the sciences, yet also his firm conviction about the existence of causal relations between the individual things in our world. He further assumes rather casually in his text a dozens of times that certain passions or phenomena are the effects of other passions or phenomena and does not hesitate then to call the latter the causes of the first. Finally, the title of Tr. 1.3.3 is nothing less than a maxim which is on an equal foot with the third axiom in the first part of the *Ethica*.

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| [...] a cause is always necessary (p. 126). | [...] if there is no determinate cause, it is impossible for an effect to follow (p. 410). |
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The subsequent text explains. “It is a general maxim in philosophy, that whatever begins to exist, must have a cause of existence [...] It is impossible for men in their heart really to doubt of the necessity of a cause” (ib.). Tradition considers this maxim to be clear by intuition. On the one hand Hume seems to subscribe to this tradition, which he does not contradict explicitly. On the other hand, however, he detracts from the axiomatic and incontestable truth value of the general maxim by declaring that “the gradation, therefore, from probabilities to proofs is in many cases insensible” (p. 181). What is happening here in the mind of our young philosopher? Does he not confuse here our modest probability of factual causal relations with our highest certainty of necessary causality in nature?⁶² The situation is much better in the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, which is not simply the repetition of the same moves. Here Hume joins Spinoza very decidedly:

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| It is universally allowed that matter, in all its operations, is actuated by a necessary force, and that every natural effect is so precisely determined by the energy of its cause that no other effect, in such particular circumstances, could possibly have resulted from it (EHU 8.64; p. 82). | Things could not have been produced by God in any other way or order than that in which they were produced” (E. 1/33; p. 27). “In these propositions I have explained [...] that all things have been predetermined by God (E. /app.). |
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Everybody knows, of course, about Spinoza’s identification of God and Nature by his famous dictum ‘*Deus sive Natura*’. What is especially striking in the coupled quotes is the typical twist in the hypothetical conjugation of the verb which is correspondent on both sides. Spinoza: ‘*could not have been produced in an other way*’; Hume: ‘*no other effect could have resulted from*’. Both authors stress the lawful determinism in the natural production processes. Hume is again debit to Spinoza, this time to the first part of the *Ethica*, whose parallel we had left blank in the scheme of section 3. It may not be useless to select another couple of parallel quotes confirming this point which is so important for both authors.

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| It seems almost impossible, therefore, to engage either in science or action of any kind without acknowledging the doctrine of necessity [...] Here is a connected chain of natural causes [...] a train of causes, cemented together by what we are pleased to call a <i>physical</i> necessity (EHU 8.70; p. 90-91). | Every particular thing [...] cannot exist nor be determined for action unless it is determined for action and existence by another cause [...] and again this cause also cannot exist [etc. etc.]. And so on to infinity (1/28; p. 24). In the universe there exists nothing contingent, but all things are determined by the necessity of the divine nature...(1/29). |
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⁶² Shortly before his death Hume explicitly intimated that he regretted that in the *Treatise* he had given occasion to so many misunderstandings concerning his idea of causality. See J. P. Wright in his chapter “Hume in Scotland” in Peter Jones (ed.) *The Reception of David Hume in Europe* (London 2008) p. 331.

Also Hume's expression 'chain of causes' is an English version of Spinoza's rather frequent '*concatenatio causarum*' or '*cconcatenatio rerum*'.⁶³ Hume moves completely in Spinoza's trace, in Spinoza's train. And for those who are so proud of Hume's originality and philosophical renewal, I hope to have 'humeanized' Spinoza and have made them participating in my admiration of his greatness!

12. Towards a realistic description of the soul

Hume is renowned for his scepticism. The reader will have understood that this title is misplaced and will not be accepted by those who have fathomed the depth of his theory of knowledge. He may be called a 'phenomenalist', but this is certainly not his last word on knowledge. We cannot but start with the ideas of the impressions and have nothing else in our luggage for our intellectual journey. And those ideas are ideas of modifications of our body, without being capable to be sorted out in subjective and objective elements.

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| <p>It is absurd, therefore, to imagine the senses can ever distinguish betwixt ourselves and external objects (Tr. 1.4.2; p. 240). ...the vulgar confound perceptions and objects (ib. p. 244). It is certain, that almost all mankind, and even philosophers themselves, for the greatest part of their lives, take their perceptions to be their only objects (ib. p. 256-257).</p> | <p>The idea of every way in which the human body is affected by external bodies must involve the nature of the human body and <i>at the same time</i> nature of the external body [...] Hence it follows in the first place that the human mind perceives the nature of many bodies <i>at the same time</i> as the nature of its own body. It follows in the second place that the ideas which we have of external bodies indicate rather the constitution of our body than the nature of the external bodies (E. 2/16 + c1 & 2; p. 54-55).⁶⁴</p> |
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What, then, is the mind? We remember that it was Hume's intention to treat of the 'nature and principles of the human mind'.⁶⁵ Discarding the Cartesian concept of the mind as a 'thinking substance' he shares Spinoza's conclusion that the mind is nothing but the set of our sensitive ideas:

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| <p>What we call a <i>mind</i>, is nothing but a heap or <i>collection of different perceptions</i>, united together by certain relations, and <i>suppos'd</i>, tho' falsely, to be endow'd with a perfect <i>simplicity</i> and identity [...] that connected mass of perceptions, which <i>constitute</i> a 'thinking being' (Tr. 1.4.2; p. 257)</p> | <p>The idea which <i>constitutes</i> the formal being of the human <i>mind</i> is <i>not simple</i>, but <i>composed of many ideas</i> (E. 2/15; p. 54).</p> |
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⁶³ See Giancotti, *Lexicon Spinozanum*, o.c. p. 197.

⁶⁴ With 'at the same time' Parkinson translates the Latin '*simul*', that was rendered sharper by Hume's 'indistinguishable'. Perceiving things at the same time does not perse exclude that we see different things. Better would have been: 'together with and as a unity'.

⁶⁵ See Tr. 1.1.2 and our section 5.

Hume still does not avoid the Cartesian terminology (put by me between ‘ and ’), but it is undisputable that he fully deconstructs its content. And there are too many words borrowed from Spinoza’s text, including the etymological equivalent of ‘*mens*’, to maintain the supposition of his independently conceiving his phenomenal theory of the mind. A literary beauty is also his metaphor of our consciousness as an internal monitor. “The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance” (Tr. 1.4.6; p. 301).

My mental identity resolves in a series of visions or imaginations. “I never can catch myself at any time without a perception” (ib.). The mind as nothing but ‘a bundle of different perceptions’ (ib.) is a definitive debunking of the traditional, popular and Cartesian view of its substantial identity, loosely connected with the body.

And as regards Hume’s scepticism: “nature breaks the force of all sceptical arguments in time” (Tr. 1.4.4; p. 238). We discussed the outbreak already in our section 10 on the comparison of ideas and the three kinds of knowledge. We escape the relativity of our fluctuant perceptions by means of the mathematical identification of their common elements. We touched already such a common element in the ‘causality maxim’, which is in fact the greatest common denominator of all empirical sequences. Hume does subscribe to this proposition concerning the ‘physical necessity’ of everything being a shackle in a chain of causes.⁶⁶ But our perceptions also permit lower level identifications on account of their ‘constancy’, ‘concurrence’ and ‘coherence’ (Tr. 1.4.4; p. 244-245) which are, therefore, reliable and distinguishable from fluctuant images and mere hallucinations. The higher the degree of their intricacy, the closer they come to mathematical truths.

13. Our expectation of the future analysed

Hume’s ‘mental geography’ (EHU 1/8) pays also attention to our prognostics. Do we know what will happen, and if yes, how? The laws of mathematics and physics that we discover in the comparison of our ideas and the deductions from them, will not enable us to predict the future state of our environment. The causality maxim and the law that motion is communicated by impulse is not helpful, because, as Hume also stated, the springs and principles are innumerable and we never know which ones are active. “These ultimate springs and principles are totally shut up from human curiosity and enquiry” (EHU 4/26; p. 30). I quoted already Spinoza’s ‘*quomodo res revera ordinatae et concatenatae sunt plane ignoramus*’.⁶⁷ The various mechanisms of nature can cross and obstruct each other and turn or bend each other to seemingly opposite effects. An axiom never allows to draw a detailed conclusion.⁶⁸ Moreover, scientific propositions known by intuition or demonstration are like geometrical figures as a line or circle, to which no actual figure fully corresponds.

Normally our behaviour is regulated by custom: “the great guide of human life” (EHU 5.36; p. 44). The anticipation of our future is, therefore, purely a question of belief on the basis of experienced regularities. Our past determines our expectation of the future. Again: Hume will not have been totally ignorant about Spinoza’s explaining our expectations by referring to the contents of our memory.

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| When any object is found by experience to | If the human body has once been affected at |
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⁶⁶ See section 11.

⁶⁷ See section 11.

⁶⁸ Cf. TIE 93; p. 39: “From universal axioms alone the intellect cannot descend to singulars, since axioms extend to infinity, and do not determine the intellect to the contemplation of one singular thing rather than another”.

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| <p>be always accompany'd with another; whenever the first object appears, tho' changed in very material circumstances; we naturally <i>fly to the conception of the second</i> ... Nothing can undeceive us" Tr. 2.2.8; p. 422). We may observe that the supposition, that the future resembles the past, is not founded on arguments of any kind, but is deriv'd entirely from habit (Tr. 1.3.12; p. 184). All our reasonings concerning the probability of causes are founded on the transferring of past to future (Tr. 1.3.12; p. 188). All reasoning concerning matter of fact [...] arises entirely from experience, when we find that any particular objects are <i>constantly</i> conjoined withy each other (EHU 4.23; p. 27).</p> | <p>the same time by two or more bodies, when the mind afterwards remembers any one of them it <i>will straightway remember the others</i> (E. 2/18; p. 56). ...and the more often he sees them in this order the more constant (<i>eo constantius</i>) will his imaginings be. But if at any time it comes about that one evening instead of Simon he sees James, then the next morning he will imagine with the evening time now Simon and now James [...] and so his imagination will waver (E. 2/44s; p. 73).</p> |
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Spinoza formulates our empirically based expectation in the *indicativus futurus*. As long as we have no conflicting evidence, we are practically sure about what will happen. Both authors stress that a necessary condition for this assurance is that the members of our bipolar or multipolar sequence were without exception '*constantly*' together. The Spinozistic source of Hume's theory about our expectations of the future cannot be denied, as was recently also eloquently indicated by Emanuela Scribano, who imagines Hume during his writing the *Treatise* in La Flèche as "bent over the book by the systematic atheist".⁶⁹

14. A coded history of philosophy

In *Treatise* 1.4.3-5 Hume writes in rough features his own history of philosophy. This survey is a fascinating sketch, but also often misunderstood: as if he opposes himself to the trend of modern philosophy, to Spinoza and Locke in particular. He seemingly does so, but the question must be whether this is not a deliberate act of misleading presentation, whose clandestine and authentic intention has to be composed from scattered potsherds of textual fragments.

His "criticism of the fictions of the ancient philosophy, concerning substances, and substantial forms, and accidents, and occult qualities" (Tr. 1.4.3; p. 268) is the least problem and can be completely aligned to Spinoza's and Locke's critique on the Aristotelian and scholastic philosophy. Both giants (the 'most judicious philosophers'!) had already deconstructed the popular and antique concept of *substances* behind 'our several distinct sensible qualities' (ib. p. 269), which was not even attacked by Descartes. A moderately informed reader will not need the provision of corresponding texts. Spinoza and Locke both accepted only one substance variously modified and both denied the possibility of detailed knowledge of the physical modifications in our universe.⁷⁰

Their shared critique on the traditional fictions of *faculties*, however, deserves a separate treatment, especially also while Hume is enjoyably ironic on this topic.

⁶⁹ See her "Hume and Spinoza on the Relation of Cause and Effect", o. c. p. 35. "Hume includes the *Ethics*' analysis of association of ideas in his own theory of the origin of belief" (p. 238).

⁷⁰ See my *John Locke*, o.c. section 4 and 37.

| <i>Spinoza</i> | <i>Locke</i> | <i>Hume</i> |
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| <p>The will differs from this or that volition in the same way as whiteness differs from this or that thing or humanity from this or that man [...] The will, then, is only a being of reason (<i>ens rationis</i>) and ought not in any way to be called a cause of this or that volition (Letter 2; p. 168).</p> <p>"In the same manner it may be shown that there does not exist in the mind an absolute <i>faculty</i> of understanding, desiring, loving, etc. Whence it follows that these and such like faculties are either entirely fictitious, or nothing else than metaphysical entities or universals, which we are wont to form from particular things.... (E. 2/48s; p. 76).</p> | <p>The ordinary way of speaking is that the understanding and will are two <i>faculties</i> of the mind: a word proper enough, if it be used, as all words should be, so as not to breed any confusion in men's thoughts, by being supposed to stand for some real beings in the soul that performed those actions of understanding and volition [...] Yet, I suspect, I say, <i>that this way of speaking of faculties has misled many into a confused notion of so many distinct agents in us</i>, which had their several provinces and authorities and did command, obey, and perform several actions (2.21.6; p. 196). [Locke excludes a, wk] digestive faculty, motive faculty, elective faculty (ib. 20; p. 202).</p> | <p>But as nature seems to have observ'd a kind of justice and compensation in every thing, she has not neglected philosophers more than the rest of the creation; but has reserved them a consolation amid all their disappointments and afflictions. This consolation principally consists in their invention of the words <i>faculty</i> and <i>occult quality</i>. [...] So it naturally happens, that after the frequent use of terms, which are wholly insignificant and unintelligible, we fancy them to be on the same footing with the precedent [idea], and to have a secret meaning ... They need only say, that any phenomenon, which puzzles them arises from a <i>faculty</i> or occult quality and there is an end of all dispute and enquiry on the matter (Tr. 1.4.3; p. 273).</p> |

Hume's example for the reprehensible 'occult qualities' was spoon-feed him by his predecessors too.

| <i>Spinoza</i> | <i>Locke</i> | <i>Hume</i> |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Hence we understand how it comes about that we love or hate certain things without having any known cause for it, but only out of what people call <i>sympathy and antipathy</i>. To this we should refer those objects which affect us with pleasure or pain merely owing to the fact that they have something in common with</p> | <p>That there are such associations of them made by custom in the minds of most men, I think nobody will question who has well considered himself or others; and to this, perhaps, might be justly attributed most of the <i>sympathies and antipathies</i> observable in men, which work as strongly and produce as regular</p> | <p>But among all the instances, wherein the Peripatetics have shewn they were guided by every trivial propensity of the imagination, no one is more remarkable than their <i>sympathies, antipathies, and horrors of a vacuum</i>. There is a very remarkable inclination in human nature, to bestow on external</p> |

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| something that is wont to affect us with pleasure or pain ... I know that <i>certain writers who first introduced these terms, sympathy and antipathy</i> , wished to signify thereby certain occult qualities; but nevertheless I think we may by the same terms understand known or manifest qualities(3/15s; p. 96).. | effects as if they were natural; and are therefore called so, though they at first had no other original but the <i>accidental connexion</i> of two ideas (ECHU 2.33.7; p. 337). ⁷¹ | objects the same emotions, which it observes in itself; and to find every where those ideas, which are most present in it. This inclination, it is true, is suppressed by a little reflection, and only takes place in <i>children</i> , poets, and the <i>ancient philosophers</i> [...] by these fictions of sympathy and antipathy (Tr. 1.4.3; p. 274). |
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That sympathy and antipathy are especially frequent among children is underlined also by Locke and Spinoza. See *Essay* 2.33.7-8 and *Ethica* 3/32s: “For we find that children, inasmuch as their bodies are, so to speak, in equilibrium from the first will laugh and cry merely because they see others laugh or cry”(p. 106). We see, then, that Hume joins perfectly Locke and Spinoza in their critique on antique philosophy.

But isn't ‘modern philosophy’ another story? To begin with Hume gives a correct and rather sympathetic tableau of the main attainment of modern philosophy: the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, as they were labelled by John Locke, who, in his turn, could for this distinction fall back on Spinoza's distinction between man's imaginations and their common elements.⁷² It is certainly worth while to quote it here integrally. After having reproached ancient philosophers to swerve entirely in fictions, Hume has to meet first the objection that he himself does not take another starting point for his philosophy, namely the imagination, ‘being the ultimate judge of all systems of philosophy’ (1.4.4). What now follows is, as he writes, the *justification* of his position. This remark demonstrates that it is indeed *his* theory, which he, in spite of apparent criticism, does not subsequently deny.

In order to *justify myself*, I must *distinguish in the imagination betwixt the principles which are permanent, irresistible, and universal*; such as the customary transition from causes to effects, and from effects to causes: *And the principles, which are changeable, weak, and irregular*; such as those I have just now taken notice of. The former are the foundation of all our thoughts and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin. The latter are neither unavoidable to mankind, nor necessary [...] The modern philosophy pretends to be entirely free from this defect [of occult qualities, wk], and to arise only from *the solid, permanent and consistent principles of the imagination* [...] For upon the removal of sounds, colours, heat, cold, and other sensible qualities, from the rank of continu'd independent existences, we are reduc'd merely to what are called primary qualities, as the only real ones, of which we have any adequate notion. These primary qualities are extension and solidity. With their different mixtures and modifications; figure, motion, gravity, and cohesion. The generation, encrease, decay, and corruption of animals and vegetables, are nothing but changes of figure and motion; as also the operations of all bodies on each other; of fire, of light, water, air, earth, and of all the elements and powers of nature. One figure and motion produces another figure and motion; nor does there remain in the material universe any other principle, either active or passive, of which we can form the most distant idea (Tr. 1.4.4; p. 274-276).

⁷¹ For this ‘accidental’ cf. *Ethica* 3/15 (to which Spinoza's own remark on sympathy and antipathy was attached): “Anything can accidentally be the cause of pleasure, pain, or desire”.

⁷² See my *John Locke*, o.c. section 17.

This is the mechanistic philosophy of Spinoza and Locke, which Hume voraciously appropriates. The general ‘causality maxim’ is indicated as its principal principle besides many other permanent and consistent elements in the universe of our imagination. Elements that are shared by *all* various imaginations must constitute our *adequate* concepts of what is real and primary in the physical world. This is precisely the way out of our subjective consciousness, as it was designed by Spinoza in his theory of the common notions of the :common things:

Those things which are common to all, and which are equally in a part and in the whole, can only be conceived adequately... Corollary: Hence it follows that there are certain ideas or notions common to all men. For (Lemma 2) all bodies agree in certain things which (prev. prop.) must adequately or clearly and distinctly be perceived by all (E. 2/38; p. 66).

Hume had already subscribed to this theory by his adhesion to Spinoza’s geometrical demonstration of the origin of our highest kind of knowledge (intuition) from the automatic comparison of the ideas of impressions (i.e. our imaginations). In the lengthy quote above he enumerates a series of its capital branches. Generation and corruption of vegetables and animals are effects of the ongoing and never ending process of motion and configuration of small particles. The passage reminds the informed reader of Locke’s Spinozistic explosion in *Essay 4.6.11*. The final sentence emphasizes that this radical mechanicism is the only possible and therefore the obligatory theory for the illuminated philosopher of modern times. Hume certainly writes about himself. Had he not assented to the philosophers who observe “that almost in every part of nature there is contained a vast variety of springs and principles, which are hid, by reasons of their minuteness or remoteness etc” (Tr. 1.3.12; p. 182)? The principles spoken off there are the same as the ‘permanent and irresistible principles’ here. Later he once refers to the ‘unchangeable and eternal principles’, which are working always and everywhere.⁷³

But Hume intentionally misleads his readers in letting his warm and magisterial exposition of radical mechanicism follow by a four pages of weak and worthless criticism, as if he implicitly tells us: take it or leave it. What he brings up are piece for piece inappropriate and unconvincing notes, which nobody can interpret as being sincere or ‘ad rem’. The line of argument therein is: we cannot escape the circle of our ideas. But, was not the whole purpose of the theory of the highest kinds of knowledge, that we can and how we can, without overthrowing empiricism? A last trick in his disguised appearance for his hostile audience is the sentence: “The impressions, which enter by the sight and hearing, the smell and taste, are affirm’d by modern philosophy to be without any resembling objects, and consequently the idea of solidity, which is suppos’d to be real, can never be deriv’d from any of the senses” (p. 279). The subtlety is ingenious. No modern philosopher asserted the resemblance between the secondary qualities and external things. But all of them, at least Spinoza, Locke and even Boyle, claim that the idea of solidity is from another order or category.

15. Embracement of the monstrous Spinoza

The young Hume had a problem : how could he make clear to his less erudite readers that he was not a follower of Spinoza? Even a disguised acclamation of ‘modern philosophy’, as done above in his section 4, was a high risk for being caught on accusation of atheism. A

⁷³ See his *Essays*, o.c. p. 18 in the essay “Politics a science”.

suspicion already of his moving in the direction of Spinoza would certainly block his chance on an academic career. Therefore he had to be more blatant in his rejection of the satanic deluder of the whole age, whose philosophy infiltrated or confused the minds of so many people (Ramsay, Malebranche, Locke, Bayle, Berkeley, Mandeville). What precisely was his stand?

He could devise no better and more innocent starting point for the operation that had to unburden him from blame and suspicion than the modern attack on the concept of 'substance', that he had already introduced in the wake of Locke. Descartes had conceived our soul as a 'thinking substance', but where are the impressions of this substance? "We have, therefore, no idea of a substance" (Tr. 1.4.5;p. 282). Just like it has no sense to dispute about the freedom of a non-existing faculty of will, we ought to "abandon utterly the dispute about materiality and immateriality of the soul". This is written down in a section "On the immateriality of the soul", which could have been finished, then, by this phrase. But Hume continues, and not without reason. Does his farewell to a more or less independent soul not bring him too close in the neighbourhood of Locke's (Spinozistic but also disguised) position of man as finite and god as infinite 'thinking matter'? ⁷⁴

The current opposition against Descartes' concept of the soul is for Hume a welcome 'occasion' (p. 288) for clearing up his own too conspicuous and ambivalent opposition against Spinoza. The question is broached on a higher level; it is no longer concerning the soul as 'thinking substance', but concerning God as 'thinking substance'. "I assert that the doctrine of the immateriality, simplicity and indivisibility of a thinking substance is a true atheism and will serve to justify all those sentiments, for which Spinoza is so universally *infamous*" (p. 289). The Spinoza, mentioned here for the first time in the *Treatise*, is not the real but a transfigured one. The historical Spinoza does not conceive God as an immaterial substance and Hume cannot but know it. God's putative immateriality is subsequently also explicitly denied by himself. Nevertheless does *this* Spinoza permit him to throw dust in his reader's eyes concerning his own attitude: "I hope at least to reap one advantage, that my adversaries will not have any pretext to render the present doctrine odious by their declamations" (p. 289). Aha, this is his real target in writing this paragraph, more so than the historical truth. He does not stay on the side of the 'infamous' philosopher.

I now quote at full length the Spinoza passage, in which Hume does not distort the doctrine of his master, as he did just before this passage, although he formulates this doctrine in his own terminology:

The fundamental principle of the atheism of Spinoza is the doctrine of the simplicity of the universe and the unity of that substance, in which he supposes both thought and matter to inhere. There is only one substance, says he, in the world; and that substance is perfectly simple and indivisible [not immaterial now! Wk], and exists every where, without any local presence. Whatever we discover externally by sensation; whatever we feel internally by reflection; all these are nothing but modifications of that one, simple, and necessarily existent being, and are not possest of any separate or distinct existence. Every passion of the soul; every configuration of matter, however different and various, inhere in the same substance, and preserve in themselves their characters of distinction, without communicating them to that subject, in which they inhere. The same substratum, if I may so speak, supports the most different modifications, without any difference in itself; and varies them,

⁷⁴ See my *John Locke*, o.c. sections 23 and 37. The way I circumscribe here Locke's position are his own words in a letter to Van Limborch: "*rem vel substantiam cogitantem, eamque esse de qua affirmari possit esse vel finitam vel infinitam*". See my e-publication "Een curieuze kwestie. Hudde in discussie met Spinoza, Van Limborch, Locke en De Volder" (p. 19) on http://www.benedictusdespinoza.nl/lit/klever_GODS_UNICITEIT.pdf

without any variation. Neither time, nor place, nor all the diversity of nature are able to produce any composition or change in its perfect simplicity and identity (Tr. 1.4.5;p. 289).

This is nothing less than a *correct and also charming presentation* of the hard core of Spinoza's doctrine, including the unity and uniqueness of substance, its simplicity and materiality annex thinking, the qualification of particular thoughts and things as modifications. An innovative and fairly meaningful term in this context is the word 'configuration' for the various forms of matter to which our thoughts are correspondent (which, however, is not said in this passage).⁷⁵ The explicit denial of the possibility of God's 'local presence' might be interpreted as an exclusion of personal appearances or of any kind of Eucharistic transubstantiation.

Just as in the case of Hume's sketch of the trend of modern philosophy in the previous section, also here the style of his sketch (e.g. 'whatever we discover', 'all these *are* but') betrays security ('indicativus praesens'), some personal involvement and even some sympathy. This is also signalled in the context. Spinoza's disqualification 'infamous' is suddenly changed into an appreciative '*famous*'! But it is certainly not more than a subtle information for insiders. The superficial reader is only struck by what follows: "without entering farther into these gloomy and obscure regions, I shall be able to shew, that this hideous hypothesis is almost the same with that of the immateriality of the soul" (p. 289). He will be content with this condemnation.

But there is another sign of Hume's real intention, or better *confession* of his belonging to Spinoza's camp. Further on in the section he asks "whether all the absurdities, which have been found in the system of Spinoza, may not likewise be discover'd in that of Theologians" (p. 292). If so, that would reinforce their abject character. And really, it is like that. But the statement is double edged.

For our Theologians pretend to make a monopoly of the word *action*, and may not the atheists likewise take possession of it, and affirm that plants, animals, men, etc. are nothing but particular actions of one simple universal substance, which exerts itself from a blind and absolute necessity? This, you'll say is utterly absurd. I own 'tis unintelligible; but at the same time assert, according to the principles above explained, that 'tis impossible to discover any absurdity in the supposition, that all the various objects in nature are actions of one simple substance " (p. 294).

Disguised in the cloths of a theologian Hume subscribes to the Spinozistic 'uncausality' and necessarily working of the divine Substance, producing things that are but modifications, not really acting themselves. There can be no longer any misunderstanding of his position. Was he sincere in calling Spinoza's theory a 'hideous hypothesis'? This was also very demonstratively but rather transparently done by Pierre Bayle in his well known article 'Spinoza' of his widely read *Dictionnaire historique et critique*.⁷⁶ "*C'est la plus monstrueuse hypothèse qui se puisse imaginer, la plus absurde*". Both italicised words became part of Hume's vocabulary. The 'absurdities' of Spinoza's system were not different from the theological absurdities about God's uncausality and determination of everything. And its 'monstrosity'? In the conclusion of book 1 of the *Treatise* Hume complains as an outcast or rejected prophet, that nobody will harken to him and everybody considers him as a dangerous person. "Every one keeps at a distance, and dreads that storm, which beats upon

⁷⁵ The wider context, however, does supply the correspondence thesis: "every perceivable relation, whether of connexion or repugnance, must be common both to objects and impressions" (p. 291).

⁷⁶ Rotterdam 1697.

me from every side. I have expos'd myself to the enmity of all metaphysicians, logicians, mathematicians, and even theologians; and can I wonder at the insults I must suffer? I have declar'd my dis-approbations of their systems; and can I be surpriz'd, if they should express a hatred of mine and of my person" (p. 312). And yes, there it comes: his mental identification with Spinoza: "I fancy myself some strange uncouth *monster*" (311). He feels himself alone in his philosophy. Alone, we must conclude, with the 'monster' Spinoza, against whom all traditional philosophers rebelled furiously.

Richard Popkin, who as one of the first historians paid attention to the here discussed passages of the *Treatise*, was not wrong in claiming that Hume's outburst has to be sized up as "a rhetorical denunciation of Spinoza's view, expected of any philosophical author who mentioned him".⁷⁷ Or, we may add, was accused of Spinozism, as in the case of John Locke who, then, flatly denied that he was 'well read' in the work of 'the decied name'.⁷⁸

16. *More confessions of the young philosopher*

The conclusion of book 1 (1..4.7) is also revealing in another respect. One gets the impression that in this piece of autobiography Hume has less control over his pen than in the previous sections. He tells us that in writing the first book of the *Treatise* he had the shocking experience "that the understanding, when it acts alone, and according to its most general principles, entirely subverts itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition, either in philosophy or common life" (p. 315). The 'general principles' have to be identified as the high securities resulting from the comparison of our ideas. And it are these principles, which result into his paradoxical and seemingly improbable views concerning whatever things of ordinary life. He cannot help it and feels himself seduced to throw all his books and papers in the fire. "I must yield to the current of nature, in submitting to my senses and understanding" (p. 317). It is a process which overwhelms him. Was he previously the puppet or patient of "philosophical melancholy and delirium" (p. 316), now is it, as an effect of the 'running animal spirits', the joy of a new insight that pervades him. "If I must be a fool ... my follies shall at least be natural and agreeable" (p. 317). Having finished a gigantic job he is a happy young man. Would he eventually be forced to renounce or banish his insights, "I feel I should be a looser in point of pleasure" (p. 318). Does he perhaps surmise and already fear a threatening condemnation? He had struggled with the demon of scepticism. Partly he had been forced to yield, but finally he had won. Our knowledge is not a copy of external things existing independently outside our skin, but essentially the reflection of our sensible impressions. He had been able to defeat the full-fledged sceptic by demonstrating that by the automatic comparison of our empirical ideas we penetrate to absolutely certain principles, that do have an objective value. One is permitted to concede to the sceptic that all our knowledge is but belief, but

⁷⁷ See his "Hume and Spinoza", o.c. p. 67. Popkin's conclusion, which was also based on his analysis of Hume's *Natural History of Religion*, sounds in total: "Hume was originally overtly interested in Spinoza. He forged a powerful argument against the theologians from his understanding of Spinoza. Filtered through Bayle. Spinoza then disappeared as a character in Hume's writing, but he developed views like Spinoza's to attack popular religion" (p. 90). To my view Hume's interest in Spinoza went further than suggested by Popkin. He must have studied his texts thoroughly. Moreover, after his writing *Treatise* 1.4.5 Spinoza as a character does not disappear to the background of his philosophy. He will occupy his mind in subsequent books and essays. Also Boss speaks about Hume's "emploi marginal et rhétorique de Spinoza, uniquement fondé sur sa valeur affective négative dans l'opinion publique de l'époque" (o.c. p. 20) "pour détourner de lui l'accusation de l'athéisme" (p. 21).

⁷⁸ See my *John Locke*, o.c. p. 1.

one has to convince him also that there is a difference between low and high belief, between marginal and central belief, between weak and stable belief. The 'degree of intricacy' with other cognitive items in our consciousness is determinative for the 'force degree' of our belief. Without accepting by experience that heat is an effect of fire and that water can extinguish it, daily life would become impossible for us. "If we believe, that fire warms, or water refreshes, 'tis only because it costs us too much pains to think otherwise" (p. 317). Ordinary causal relations in nature belong to this category, wherein it is not practicable but yet not impossible to think otherwise. In mathematics, however, the intricacy of our cognitive items has risen to 100%, which includes necessity and uncontradictable evidence about reality. Ultimately Hume is not a sceptic. He is an eminent scientific and critical philosopher, just like Spinoza.

Hume's 'science of man' is not yet completed with this purely Spinozistic epistemology. Our soul consists of ideas of the impressions, but also of the effects of these impressions ('impressions of the ideas'), that we could label reactions. In his section 1.3.10 ("On the influence of belief") he already shortly and forcefully indicated which are these effects and what their role is in our behaviour: "There is implanted in the human mind a perception of pain and pleasure, as the chief spring and moving principle of all its actions" (p. 167). Hume is on the point of starting now the science of human morals, promised by the title of his book, which begins with a doctrine of the passions and finishes with a political theory (the books 2 and 3 of the *Treatise*). Whoever is no stranger in Jerusalem knows that Spinoza in *Ethica* 3 (About the origin and nature of our reactions) and *Ethica* 4 (about their irresistible power) does exactly the same as what Hume here so marvellously summarizes and sets down: demonstrating that the passions of sadness and pleasure are the source and moving factors of all our actions. Spinoza could not have improved nor wished to adapt this formulation.

In his conclusion to book 1 he can hardly refrain his impatience to treat the powers of the passions: "I cannot forbear having a curiosity to be acquainted with the principles of moral good and evil, the nature and foundation of government, and the cause of those several *passions and inclinations* which *actuate and govern me*" (p. 318). 'Inclination' is here his accurate translation of Spinoza's '*affectus*'. The reactions of sadness, pleasure and desire with all their variations and combinations dominate human behaviour thoroughly and completely. This is the upshot of *Ethica* 3 & 4, which books Hume is going to paraphrase. He does already perfectly know what the outcome of his projected research and writing will be. Yet he writes that he is so intensively curious to get acquainted with the principles of good and evil etc. Is this not a signal again that he finds himself in front of the text which contains the things he longs for and that he has already surveyed? One cannot be curious to what one knows already. I think his juvenile enthusiasm and impatience is mainly focused on communicating to mankind the important and highly valuable things he himself has recently discovered. "I am concern'd for the condition of the learned world, which lies under such a deplorable ignorance in all these particulars. I feel an ambition to arise in me of contributing to the instruction of mankind and of acquiring a name by *my* inventions and discoveries" (p. 318). Let us forgive him his undue appropriation of Spinoza's findings. This solution was for him a lesser evil than to mention his real source. Likewise we cannot take ill of his ambition to instruct mankind. '*Goria maxime ducimur*' (we humans are most lead by ambition) was the classical proverb he had read in various forms in Spinoza's text. This attitude would also become one of the first subjects for his forthcoming ethics.

17. Hume fascinated by Spinoza's geometrical method

'OF THE PASSIONS', the second book of the *Treatise*, is unmistakably inspired by the third part of the *Ethica*, which deals with the origin and nature of the *affectus*. As remarked earlier, '*affectus*' is in Spinoza's language to be distinguished from '*affectio*' (= impact, impression) and is his technical term for the psycho-physical effect of the affection and is practically a synonym of the more usual word '*passion*'.

The first thing striking us here is that Hume, in contradistinction to Spinoza, does not start his treatise of the passions with an introduction. Spinoza's *praefatio* to part 3 was a very conspicuous proclamation about the principles of his methodology, in which he opposed himself sharply against Descartes and exposed as well as defended his geometrical procedure. In Hume's text the unprepared reader has at once, after a warning note about the implications of the title, to digest a whole division on 'pride and humility'. The student who compares the books with the same content will wonder, whether Hume has not censured himself by pruning a fructiferous and essential part of Spinoza's tree that had already found imitation by his admirers and even by opponents like Hume's own trusted friend Ramsay.⁷⁹ We can surmise this on good grounds, because in a later abbreviated version of this very same book, namely in the *Dissertation on the Passions* (1757), one sees appearing precisely what one badly misses here: the parallel to Spinoza's methodological introduction. I here add to this precious passage the unique methodical remark we find further on in book 2, which is even a stronger pendant of Spinoza's logical program.

It is sufficient for my purpose, if I have made it appear, that, in the production and conduct of the passions that there is a certain *regular mechanism* which is susceptible of as accurate a disquisition, *as the laws of motion, optics, hydrostatics, or any part of natural philosophy* (*Philosophical Works*, o.c. vol. 3, p. 166).

To this I reply that in judging of the actions of men we must proceed *upon the same maxims, as when we reason concerning external objects* (Tr. 2.3.1; p. 451).

There must be one and the same way of understanding the nature of all things, that is *by means of the universal laws and rules of nature*. Therefore such emotions as hate, anger, envy, etc., considered in themselves, follow from the same necessity and virtue of nature as other particular things: and therefore they acknowledge certain causes through which they are understood, and have certain properties equally worthy of our knowledge as the properties of any other things, the contemplation alone of which delights us. And so I shall treat of the nature and force of the emotions, and the power of the mind over them, in the same manner as I treated of God and the mind in the previous parts, and *I shall regard human actions and appetites exactly as if I were dealing with lines, planes, and bodies* (E.3 pref.; p. 84).

The agreement is, of course, more than striking. Later Hume will confess, that he is not the only one, who strives after an accurate cartography of the passions. "It is true, few can form an exact system of the passions" (Tr. 2.2.1; p. 382). Among the 'few' he shall have conceived

⁷⁹ See section 2.

above all Spinoza! Human actions are subject to the very same rules and mechanisms as the other parts of nature and require, therefore, to be explained according to the same method: the geometrical method. This implies that we treat them as if we knew nothing about their inside and that we consider their operations only with the help of the maxims we make use of in other parts of physics. This is nothing less than a revolution in the philosophy, a revolution which constitutes the ‘science of man’ as a part of general physics.

One would expect, then, that Hume, once he treads in the footsteps of Spinoza, would have presented beforehand a summary of general physics, just as Spinoza had done in his famous physical excursion after *Ethica* 2/13 and Locke in his wake. For this, however, one finds nothing but an excuse that this would bring him too far away from his subject, the passions.

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| Wherefore I have thought it worth while to explain and prove more accurately these matters, for which purpose I must premise a few <i>statements concerning the nature of bodies</i> (Spinoza, E. 2/13s; p. 49) | I hope I shall be pardoned this <i>little excursion into natural philosophy</i> , it being necessary in our present inquiry to distinguish the primary and real qualities of bodies ... from those secondary and imputed qualities (Locke, ECHU 2.8.22). | As these [impressions] depend upon natural and physical causes, the examination of them wou’d lead me too far from my present subject, into the <i>sciences of anatomy and natural philosophy</i> . For this reason I shall here confine myself to those other impressions, which I have call’d secondary and reflective, as arising either from the original impressions, or from their ideas (Hume, Tr. 2.1.1; p. 327). |
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Hume apologized after having repeated his earlier made distinction between “*original impressions or impressions of sensation* [being] such as without any antecedent perception arise in the soul, from the constitution of the body, from animal spirits, or from the application of objects to the external organs” and “*secondary, or, reflective impressions* such as proceed from some of these original ones, either immediately or by the interposition of its idea. Of the first kind are the impressions of the senses, and all bodily pains and pleasures: Of the second are the passions, and other emotions resembling them” (p. 327). This capital distinction is likewise derived from Spinoza’s capital distinction between *affectiones* (= Hume’s ‘original impressions or impressions of sensation’) and *affectus* (= Hume’s ‘secondary or reflective impressions’).⁸⁰ Both authors consider pain, pleasure and desire as ‘original’ or ‘direct’ (Hume), ‘primary and primitive’ (Spinoza, E. 3/11) in our consciousness, of which other passions like love and hatred, pride and humility etc. are combinations or indirect effects. There is a minor difference between their division and terminology that does not in the least injure Hume’s joining Spinoza’s treatise of the passions.

⁸⁰ See above section 7.

One might say that Hume improves Spinoza by not arranging pleasure and pain under ‘passions’, as Spinoza still did in 3/11s.⁸¹ For to be called a passion (or in Dutch ‘hartstocht’), an emotion has to be violent. Pleasure and pain (and also desire) can better be only considered as the causes of the passions. That is how Spinoza considered them too: “the other passions arise from these three”. And so also, naturally, does his pupil: “I shall now explain these *violent* emotions or passions, their nature, *origin, causes, and effects*” (p. 328). Nobody in modern philosophy has better understood and more precisely formulated the purport of the central parts of the *Ethica* than just David Hume in this phrase, which he had so beautifully anticipated with his earlier and already quoted statement about our “perception of pain and pleasure as the chief *spring and moving principles* of all [our] actions” (p. 167).

18. ‘Autistic’ attitudes: pride and humility

Hume does not follow on the foot Spinoza’s arrangement of the stuff. Whether here pops up a point of criticism, is not clear for me and is nowhere indicated. After the above treated various divisions of the subject he introduces another one in section 2.1.2, which is not as such retrievable in Spinoza’s text: between the self-directed and the other-directed passions. Pride and humility, to which he dedicates the first great part of his second book, belongs to the first category, where the “object is self, or that succession of related ideas and impressions, of which we have an intimate memory and consciousness” (Tr. 2.1.2; p. 329). Love and hatred, to which passions the second part is dedicated, belong to the second category, “where the object is some other person, of whose thoughts, actions and sensations we are *not* conscious” (Tr. 2.2.1; p. 379).

Another slight difference from Spinoza is Hume’s introductory remark that he cannot give a ‘definition’ of these or other passions. “The utmost we can pretend to is a *description* of them” (p. 327). Spinoza pretends to present definitions of the passions; see at the end of his part 3 the title ‘*Affectuum definitiones*’ (definitions of the passions) for the subsequent 48 definitions. But as in the former case also here the difference is more apparent than real. Both authors aim at the clarifying description of human attitudes revealing their causes, from which they originate. A comparison of their descriptions c.q. definitions demonstrates that the difference is more nominal or verbal than real.⁸² Not only does Spinoza not provide us in the *Ethica* with scholastic definitions; he is also in another sense purely descriptively working: he is never prescribing something and shall never formulate norms of behaviour, things we *ought* to do. Obligations are outside the reach of science, as also Hume learned from him.

Well, when we now shove side by side Hume’s and Spinoza’s description of pride and humility, we will see that they essentially agree with each other.

⁸¹ “Besides these three I do not acknowledge any other primary emotion”.

⁸² Cf. Spinoza’s critique on the Aristotelian logic in KV 1/79: “They say that a legitimate definition must be by genus and difference. But though all the logicians admit this, I do not know where they get it from [...] We shall produce other laws of definition” (Curley, o.c. p. 90). See also TIE 96: “The definition will have to include the proximate cause” (ib., o.c. p. 39).

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| By <i>pride</i> I understand that agreeable impression, which arises in the mind, when the view either of our virtue, beauty, riches or <i>power</i> makes us satisfied with ourselves; and that by <i>humility</i> I mean the opposite impression (2.1.7; p. 349). | <i>Pride (acquiescentia in se ipso)</i> is pleasure arising from the fact that man regards himself and his <i>power</i> of acting” (df 25). ⁸³ “ <i>Humility (humilitas)</i> is pain arising from the fact that man regards his want of power or weakness (df. 26; p. 133). |
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There are more common elements in the ‘definitions’. The words ‘*view*’ and ‘*arises*’ correspond with the words ‘*contemplatur*’ and ‘*orta ex*’, which together make it indubitable that Hume’s description is a crypto-quotation.

Naturally we are not subject to the pair of opposite emotions. Dependent upon the circumstances and the things that befall us, we will now be content with ourselves and at other times will realise our weakness and arrive in a less comfortable humour. It is impossible, however, that we at the same time are both high and low, proud and shameful on what we have done or are worth in our own eyes. In cases, however, that contrary experiences would lead us to both moods, they would alternate each other or the weakest will be destroyed by the strongest one.”If they encounter, the one annihilates the other, as far as its strength goes and the remainder only of that, which is superior, continues to operate upon the mind” (2.2.2; p. 330). The result will be either pleasure and pride or sadness and depression of spirits, not a bit of both. Hume’s reasoning is purely mechanistic and geometrical. His close association with Spinoza on this point can best be illustrated by the following table.

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| Nothing can oppose or retard the impulse of passion, but a contrary impulse(Tr. 2.3.3; p. 462). Contrary passions ... mutually destroy each other (Tr. 2.3.9; p. 489). | A passion can neither be hindered nor removed save by a contrary passion and one stronger than the passion which is to be checked (<i>Ethica</i> 4/7). |
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That Hume read with great attention Spinoza’s pages on *humilitas* and *philautia* (self love or self-contentment) (*Ethica* 3/53-55) becomes also obvious in *Treatise* 2.1.8, a passage about the so called bragging, a feature disfiguring many characters. Considering their power and capacities in past and present people very easy come to kick up a dust and even to tell lies.

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| Thus we are <i>vain of the surprising adventures</i> we have met with, the escapes we have made, and dangers we have been expos’d to. Hence the origin of vulgar lying; when men without any interest, and merely out of vanity, heap up a number of extraordinary events... (p. 352) | It therefore comes about that every one is fond of relating his own exploits (<i>facta sua</i>) and displaying ostentatiously (<i>ostentare</i>) the strength both of his body and his mind, and that men are on this account a nuisance one to the other (E 3/55s; p. 121). |
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The connection with Spinoza is again undeniable, although Hume’s remark is only a free transposition of Spinoza’s elucidation of the effects of pride.

⁸³Parkinson translates ‘*acquiescentia in se ipso*’ for the passion in question with ‘self-contentment’. I prefer Hume’s choice although it is slightly surcharged.

19. Assimilation (Hume's 'sympathy') and imitation (Spinoza's 'affectuum imitatio')

A new chapter in Hume's theory of the passions stresses the fact that we have the inclination to assimilate our behaviour to the behaviour of other people, because we always take into account what others think about us and we are not insensible for their favourable assessment. That is also why we try to make a good impression and why we like to tell interesting adventures, so that we are not boring. Hume concluded section 8, from which the last quotation was taken, with the capital behavioural statement: "Men always consider the sentiments of others in their judgement of themselves". But this consideration of the way how other people look at us and think about us is still innocent in comparison with our adaptation to their pattern of behaving and living. The tendency hereto is a central proposition in Spinoza's psychology and a true hinge on which many of his arguments turn. And Hume follows on his heels, as if he by this practice wanted to demonstrate *ipso facto* that Spinoza was right.

The theme is broached in section 2.1.11 about our 'love of fame'. Fame is called by Spinoza '*gloria*' and defined as "pleasure accompanied by the idea of some action of ours which we imagine others to praise"(3/df. 30; p. 135). This, of course, feeds our self-contentment and is, therefore, utterly welcome. Nobody will despise it. Everybody does aspire to it. How do we get more of it? The reader guesses it: by imitating what other people practice. By this mechanism our primitive attitudes are reinforced:

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| ...beside these original cause of pride and humility, there is a secondary one in the opinions of others, which has an equal influence on the affections. Our reputation, our character, our name are considerations of <i>vast weight</i> and importance (2.1.11; p. 366). | Ambition is the desire <i>by which all the motions are fostered and encouraged</i> : and thus this emotion <i>can scarcely be overcome</i> . For as long as man is held by any desire, he is at the same time necessarily held by this. 'The very best men', says Cicero, 'are especially guided by glory...' (3/df.44; p. 138). |
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After this strong opening sentence, derived from Spinoza, the reader must be surprised by the next paragraph in which Hume starts explaining the effect of our love of fame by the word 'sympathy'. Had he not, with Spinoza and Locke, banished sympathy from his science of man as an 'occult quality'?⁸⁴ Occult qualities are fictions of the imagination that cannot play a role, while missing any empirical content. Yes, but in this new context sympathy acquires a completely new meaning as the name of an observable feature of our behaviour, and not a minor one.

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| No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than that propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to <i>receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments</i> , however different from, or even contrary to our own. This is not only | By the fact that we imagine a thing, which is like ourselves, and which we have not regarded with any emotion, to be affected with any emotion, we also are affected with a like emotion (3/27; p. 102). ⁸⁵ Scholium 1. This <i>imitation of passions (affectuum imitation)</i> , when it refers to pain, |
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⁸⁴ See our section 14.

⁸⁵ In this case the translation of Curley (o.c. p. 508) is better: "If we imagine a thing like us, toward which we have had no affect, to be affected with some affect, we are thereby affected with a like affect".

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| <p>conspicuous in <i>children</i>, who implicitly embrace every opinion propos'd to them; but also in men of the greatest judgement and understanding, who find it very difficult to follow their own reason or inclination, in opposition to that of their friends and daily companions (p. 367).</p> <p>It will be easy to explain the passion of <i>pity</i>, from the precedent reasoning concerning sympathy... All human creatures are related to us by resemblance. Their persons, therefore, their interests, their passions, their pains and pleasure must strike us in a lively manner, and <i>produce an emotion similar</i> to the original one (Tr. 2.2.7; p. 418). Thirdly, sympathy, which makes us partake of the satisfaction of every one, that approaches us (Tr. 2.2.5; p. 407).</p> | <p>is called <i>pity</i> (<i>commiseratio</i>); when it has reference to desire it is called emulation (<i>aemulatio</i>), which then is nothing else than the desire of anything engendered in us by the fact that we imagine others similar to us to have that desire (p. 102-103).</p> <p>For we find that <i>children</i>, inasmuch as their bodies are, so to speak, in equilibrium from the fist will laugh and cry merely because they see others laugh or cry; and whatever they see any one do they immediately desire to <i>imitate</i> (3/32s; p. 106).</p> |
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Hume was right in emphasizing the 'vast weight and importance' of Spinoza's proposition 3/27. He was a good student. This proposition, which he so neatly incorporated in his argument, is in Spinoza's subsequent demonstrations 15 times referred to. It was a fundamental principle in his exposition of at least twenty passions.⁸⁶

Hume must have been deeply impressed by the principle and must have spent months of reflection on it. He is a master in elaborating the consequences of this principle, which on their turn form its best possible illustration.

To this principles we ought to ascribe the great uniformity we may observe in the humours and turn of thinking of those of the same nation; and 'tis much more probable, that this resemblance arises from sympathy, than from any influence of the soil and climate, which, tho' they continue invariably the same, are not able to preserve the character of a nation the same for a century together. A god-natur'd man finds himself in an instant of the same humour with his company; and even the proudest and most surly take a tincture from their countrymen and acquaintance. A cheerful countenance infuses a sensible complacency and serenity into my mind; as an angry or sorrowful one throws a sudden dump upon me. Hatred, resentment, esteem, love, courage, mirth and melancholy; all these passions I feel more from communication than from my own natural temper and disposition (p. 367).⁸⁷

Spinoza avoids intentionally the word 'sympathy' for our assimilation of other people's behaviour.⁸⁸ Hume takes the risk of being misunderstood in choosing this historically load term for what he more correctly describes as 'receiving by communication the inclinations and sentiments' of other people. As far as I know he only once follows Spinoza's terminological choice 'imitation of affects'.

⁸⁶ The best explanation is given by Aalexandre Matheron in his classical *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris 1988) p. 150-190. "L'ultime fondement des relations interhumaines nous est dévoilé dans la proposition 27" (p. 151).

⁸⁷ See also another fine illustration in 2.2.7: "From the same principles we blush for the conduct of those, who behave themselves foolishly before us" (p. 419).

⁸⁸ Although he remarks that it is nonetheless permissible to use the words sympathy and antipathy for indicating 'known or manifest qualities' (3/15s; p. 96).

On one place he presents an original and really fascinating poetical alternative in writing “that the minds of men are mirrors to one another, not only because they reflect each others emotions, but also because those rays of passions, sentiments and opinions may be often reverberated, and may decay away by insensible degrees” (Tr. 2.2.5; p. 414). In our thoughts and attitudes we often cannot forbear to be assimilated to each other just as light cannot stop in being indefinitely reflected. Had Hume drawn inspiration for this metaphor from Spinoza’s letter 2 (to Oldenburg, 1661), in which he suggested that we humans are ‘like an equal mirror to the rays of the universe’?

Annette Baier is fully right in concluding, referring to my earlier articles about the subject, that

Humean *sympathy* is Spinoza’s *imitation of the affects*... Spinoza invokes this spread of affects by imitation to explain not merely pity and benevolence, but also ‘emulation’, desiring what those like us desire, ‘ambition’, the striving to please others whom we are emulating, ‘praise’, the pleased person’s response to another’s success in his endeavour to please her (3/29s), and its opposite, ‘blame’.⁸⁹

20. Relativity of good and evil, beautiful and ugly

As I said already, the order in which Hume treats of the passions is different from Spinoza’s order and sometimes a bit confusing. But I shall bring relevant fragments from Spinoza under the heads they belong to in his scheme. His part on ‘Pride and humility’ contains a chapter (section 7) on *vice and virtue*, that a Spinoza scholar would expect in the third book of the *Treatise*. just like Spinoza started with this subject in the beginning of the fourth part of the *Ethica*. The reason is probably that the word ‘comparison’ had fallen a couple of times and that this irresistibly drew his mind to a very prominent feature of Spinoza’s system. In the previous section he introduced his theme rather cautiously by writing that “we likewise judge of objects *more* [!wk] from comparison than from their real and intrinsic merit” (p. 343), as if it is not a general rule. The clausal ‘more’ must be a slip of the pen or sign of a lack of intellectual courage.

Was *Ethica* 3/27 of primary importance in our previous section, it is now the next proposition in Spinoza’s sequence, namely 3/28, which finds a parallel in Hume’s text.

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| Every passion, habit, or turn of character (say they) which has a tendency to our advantage or prejudice, gives a delight or uneasiness; and ‘tis from thence the approbation or disapprobation arises (Tr. 2.2.7; p. 346). | We endeavour to promote the coming into existence of everything that we imagine conducive to pleasure; but what we find repugnant to it, or, conducive to pain we endeavour to remove or destroy (E. 3/28; p. 103). ⁹⁰ |
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Promoting things we imagine to be pleasant and removing or destroying things we imagine to be unpleasant is stronger than Hume’s approving and disapproving. But in spite of this slightly different accent the two propositions are each others pendant. The upholders of the ‘hypothesis’ Hume formulates so nicely and to whom the word ‘they’ refers, are said to participate in a controversy ‘of late years’ about the natural versus conventional character of

⁸⁹ In her unpublished paper for Chapel Hill Workshop on Hume’s ethics: “Hume as a Closet-Spinozist”, which text was later reworked into “David Hume, Spinozist”, *Hume Studies* 19 (1993) 237-252.

⁹⁰ Just like e. 3/27 also 3/28 is a foundation stone under Spinoza’s physico-psychological building. The number of explicit references to this proposition in subsequent demonstrations is 14! See Jon Wetlesen, *Internal guide*, o.c. p. 5.

moral distinctions. That Hume sides the latter theory is clear. But he will defend this choice 'in the following book'. On the basis of our table above one might conclude that his 'they' is an implicit reference to Spinoza.

Spinoza taught already in TIE 12 that "*bonum et malum respective dicuntur*" (that good and evil are said only respectively). The main passage Hume may have in mind might be the end of the preface to *Ethica* 4: "As for the terms good and bad, they also mean nothing positive in things considered in themselves, nor are they anything else than modes of thought, or notions, which we form from the *comparison* of things to each other" (p. 143). This comparison-theory, which Hume subscribes to, leads to Spinoza's two first definitions. "I. By good I understand that which we certainly know to be useful to us. II. But by bad I understand that which we certainly know will hinder us from partaking of some good" (ib. p. 144). And this focus on something's value for our well being as the exclusive title for its goodness brings us right back to Hume's position in section 2.2.7: "The very essence of virtue, according to this hypothesis, is to produce pleasure and that of vice to give pain" (p. 347). He tries to save also part of the 'naturalistic' solution by his declaration, "that from a primary constitution of nature certain characters and passions, by the very view and contemplation produce a pain and others in like manner excite a pleasure". But this is only to throw dust in the eyes of his opponents, because he continues: "The uneasiness and satisfaction are not only inseparable from vice and virtue, but *constitute their very nature and essence*" (p. 347).⁹¹

Morality is not the only field where comparison determines everything, this is also the case with aesthetic values. Things are essentially beautiful or ugly on account of their producing pleasure and pain.

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| Beauty ... is discern'd only by a taste or sensation; we may conclude that beauty is nothing but a form, which produces pleasure, as <i>deformity</i> is a structure of parts, which conveys pain (Tr.2.2.8; p. 350) | E.g. if the motion, which the nerves receive by means of the eyes from objects before us, is <i>conducive of health</i> , those objects by which it is caused are called <i>beautiful</i> ; if it is not, then the objects are called ugly (<i>deformia</i>) (E. app.; p. 36). |
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21. Fluctuation and vacillation

In a direct relation to the subject of sympathy/imitation Spinoza sketches the situation of internal conflict. We can fall a prey to opposite seductions, so that we will hesitate and refrain from action. "This constitution of the mind, which arises from two contrary emotions, is called a wavering of the mood (*animi fluctuatio*), and it has the same relation to the emotions as doubt has to imagination" (E. 3/27s; p. 97).⁹² So we often fluctuate between love and hatred, hope and fear.⁹³ The reason why it is not impossible to be swept by contrary emotions, is "that our body is composed of many individuals of a different nature, and therefore it may be affected by one and the same body in different ways..." (ib.). Every reader of the *Ethica* must have been struck by a final phrase of part 3 about the passions, sounding like this: "And it is apparent from these propositions that we are driven (*agitari*)

⁹¹ My italics (as usual in quotations).

⁹² I changed Parkinson's translation of *animus* by 'mind' into 'mood', because Spinoza refers to the physical condition.

⁹³ Cf. the opening paragraph of the TTP: "...inter spem metumque misere fluctuant" (and being often kept fluctuating pitifully between hope and fear) (p. 3).

about by external causes in many manners, and that we, like waves of the sea driven by contrary winds, waver (*fluctuare*), unaware of the issue of our fate” (3/59s; p. 126). Hume’s exposition about the ‘direct passions’ (his qualification) of hope and fear and the uncertainty that often befalls us between the two, runs parallel to Spinoza’s.

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| <p>When good is certain, it produces joy. When evil is in the same situation there arises grief or sorrow. When either good or evil is <i>uncertain</i>, it gives rise to <i>fear or hope</i>, according to the degree of uncertainty on the one side or the other...</p> <p>Probability arises from an opposition of contrary chances or causes, by which the <i>mind is not allow’d to fix on either side, but is incessantly tost from one to another</i>, and at one moment is determin’d to consider an object as existent, and at another moment as the contrary. The imagination or understanding, call it which you please, <i>fluctuates</i> betwixt the opposite views (Tr. 2.3.9; p. 486).⁹⁴</p> | <p>For <i>hope</i> is nothing else than an <i>inconstant</i> pleasure arisen from the image of a thing future or past, of whose event we are in <i>doubt</i>; <i>fear</i>, on the other hand, is an <i>inconstant</i> sadness arisen from the image of a doubtful thing.</p> <p>But in truth as it often happens that those who have experienced many things <i>waver (fluctuent)</i> when they regard a thing as future or past, and are usually in doubt as to the event of it, hence it comes about that emotions which arise from similar images of things are <i>not constant</i>, but are usually disturbed by the images of other things, until men become more assured of the issue of the things (E. 3/18s2+1; p. 98).</p> |
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Hume writes in the context that the human condition ‘resembles a string-instrument’ (ib. p. 487) that ‘vibrates’ when touched by a plectrum.⁹⁵

That Hume’s text is interweaved with threads from Spinoza’s text becomes also clear in another passage in his section about hope and fear. For becoming convinced in this respect one needs only to compare both sides of the next table.

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| <p><i>Terror, consternation, astonishment, anxiety, and other passions of that kind, are nothing but different species and degrees of fear</i> (Tr. 2.3.9; p. 494).</p> | <p>[Admiration] called up by an object that we <i>fear</i> it is said to be a <i>consternation</i>... Wonder is called <i>veneration</i>, otherwise <i>horror (horror)</i>, if we wonder at a man’s anger, envy, etc. (E.3/52s; p. 119). <i>Consternation</i> is asserted of him whose desire of avoiding harm is hindered by his wonder at the harm which he <i>fears</i> (3/df 42).</p> |
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Man’s instability and uncertainty disappear as soon as he is persuaded that he cannot reach his imagined goals. Already in *Treatise* 2.1.10 Hume anticipates the determination of our behaviour by external causes, a thing he will later demonstrate in 2.3.1. “According to common notions a man has no power, where very considerable motives lie betwixt him and the satisfaction of his desires, and *determine* him to forbear what he wishes to perform” (p.

⁹⁴ Hume’s ‘tost about’ reminds the *Ethica* reader of our being driven about by the waves of the sea.

⁹⁵ A good illustration of sympathy as well as vacillation is to find in *Ethica* 3/31: “If we imagine any one to love, desire, or hate anything which we ourselves love, hate, or desire, by that very fact we shall love, hate, or desire it the more. But, on the other hand, if we imagine that what we love, is avoided by some one, or conversely, then we shall undergo a wavering of the mind”.

363).⁹⁶ Hume then exemplifies this by a crypto-citation from Spinoza's *Tractatus Politicus*, which shows that he did not draw his inspiration only from the *Ethica*. He must have owned Spinoza's *Opera Posthuma* (1677), which comprises next to the *Ethica* also other works.

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| <p>I do not think I have fallen into my enemy's power, when I see him pass me in the streets with a sword by his side, while I am unprovided of any <i>weapon</i>. I know that the <i>fear of the civil magistrate</i> is as strong a restraint as any of iron, and that I am in as perfect safety as if he were <i>chain'd</i> or imprison'd. But when a person acquires such an <i>authority</i> over me, that not only there is no external obstacle to his actions; but also that he may punish or reward me as he pleases, without any dread of punishment in his turn, I then attribute a full power to him, and consider myself as his subject or vassal (Tr. 2.1.10; p. 363).</p> | <p>He has another under his <i>authority</i>, who holds him <i>bound</i>, or has taken from him <i>arms</i> and means of defence or escape, or inspired him with <i>fear</i>, or so attached him to himself by past favour, that the man obliged would rather please his benefactor than himself, and live after his mind than after his own (TP 2/10; p. 295).</p> |
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At first sight it may seem far fetched to put these fragments next to each other, but strenuous study will make it clear that Hume's passage is surely a reminiscence or better a kind of recycling of what he had read in the *Political Treatise*.

What is most important in the section under discussion, is that Hume paints man as a being that often doubts whether he can execute his plans in this or that direction. Some motives drive him irresistibly, others withhold him and condemn him to inertia. Does he really govern himself? "Nothing is more fluctuating and inconstant on many occasions, than the will of man" (p. 363). It was Spinoza who brought him upon the idea to call man's instability a 'fluctuation'. This agreement could not escape the scholar Annette Baier:

I think that the resemblance between what Spinoza writes about 'imitation of affects; and about *vacillation* in Parts III & IV of the Ethics and what Hume writes about sympathy and about ambivalence is too striking, to anyone who reads both texts, to require much commentary.⁹⁷

Hume's customary term for the extreme form of uncertainty or instability is *indifference*. Circumstances can depress us so much that we approach complete inactivity, towards a not knowing what to do, and consequently a doing nothing. An old metaphor for characterizing this attitude is a reference to the famous ass of Buridanus, who cannot chose between the heaps of hay on equal distance and therefore starves from hunger. We may not be surprised that Spinoza made use of this well known putative ass for illustrating his argument. But it is again remarkable that Hume did so, and rather obvious, under his influence.

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| But [who is not] determined by external | He would stand <i>like the schoolman's ass</i> . |
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⁹⁶ The quoted sentence is a clear statement about Hume's determinism. The reference to mankind's 'common notions' is a salute to Spinoza. The phrase 'man has no power', however, might be interpreted as an eye's wink to Locke's *Essay* 2.21 'Of power', which likewise defends the deterministic constraint of human acts of willing.

⁹⁷ "David Hume, Spinozist", o.c. p. 246.

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| things, can be explained most conveniently by the example of Buridan's ass. For if we put a man, instead of an ass, in such a condition of equilibrium, the man will rightly be considered, not a thinking thing, but a <i>most shameful (turpissimum) ass</i> , if he should perish from hunger and thirst (PPC/CM app. 2/12/13-14; p. 343). | Irresolute and undetermined, between equal motives. Or rather like the same ass between two pieces of wood or marbled, without any inclination or propensity to either side... But if, instead of <i>this fancied monster</i> , we suppose a man to form a judgement or determination in the case, there is to him a plain foundation of preference (EMP, no. 192). |
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How often man doubts and fluctuates, he will never be as stupid and monstrous as Buridan's ass. His balance may be unsteady, but reaches only the point of inertia when he dies.

22. Correspondence of love and hatred to impressions of pleasure and pain

The passions of love and hatred form the central part of Hume's as well as Spinoza's psychological theories, of which, again, the latter is not independent of the first. Spinoza's propositions on these passions are nearly uncountable. Hume dedicates the whole second part of his book *On the Passions* to them. In Hume's disguised 'quotation' of proposition 3/28 we could already read about our positive or negative attitude towards what affects us in a pleasant or unpleasant way. Love or hatred constitute our mechanical response in meeting things, which increase or decrease our power to exist. In his text Hume closely follows Spinoza's definitions, although he does not reiterate them formally. "II. Pleasure (*laetitia*) is man's transition from a less state of perfection to a greater. III. Pain (*tristitia*) is man's transition from a greater state of perfection to a lesser. VI. Love (*amor*) is pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause. VII. Hatred (*odium*) is pain accompanied by the idea of an external cause" (p. 128/130).

In contrast with pride or shame, love and hatred are not oriented on our selves, but have mostly, at least when not aimed at things, other persons as their object, "of whose thoughts, actions and sensations we are *not* conscious" (Tr. 2.2.1; p. 379). This 'not' is not to be overlooked and is not a slip of the pen. Other people's mind is closed for us; we have to base our judgment on their external behaviour and only in so far it affects us.

Love and hatred are not only direct effects of pleasant and unpleasant experiences. They also have a very precise qualitative and gradual correlation with them.

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| Nothing is more evident, than that any person acquires our kindness, or is expos'd to our ill-will, <i>in proportion to</i> the pleasure or uneasiness we receive from him, and that the passions keep pace exactly with the sensations in all their changes and variations (2.2.3; p. 397). | [no direct counterpart available, only indications like] will be greater or less ... according as they are greater or less in ...(3/21). <i>Maior et minor prout</i> (3/23) [and the innumerable times that Spinoza writes] <i>eatenus... quatenus</i> . |
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In Spinoza's and Hume's text we see develop a chain of causal relations from original impressions to impressions in a third or fourth degree. This ongoing and reverberating mechanism is best summarized by Hume, but is fully rooted in Spinoza's text. One has to acknowledge cycles from pleasure, via love, to benevolence and happiness; and from pain

via hatred, to anger and malice. Such a cycle can be conceived as *one* movement, more specifically as an effective desire.

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| Love and hatred have not only a <i>cause</i> , which excites them, <i>viz.</i> pleasure and pain; and an object to which they are directed, <i>viz.</i> a person or thinking being; but likewise an <i>end</i> , which they endeavour to attain, <i>viz.</i> the happiness or misery of the person belov'd or hated; all which views, mixing together, make only one passion. According to this system love is nothing but a desire of happiness to another person, and hatred that of misery. The desire and aversion constitute the very nature of love and hatred. They are not only inseparable but the <i>same</i> . (Tr. 2.2.6; p. 416). | We endeavour to affirm of ourselves and of what we love, everything that we imagine to affect what we love or ourselves with pleasure; and, on the other hand, we endeavour to deny of ourselves or of the object loved, everything that we imagine to affect us or the object loved with pain (E. 3/25). We endeavour to affirm, concerning a thing that we hate, all that which we imagine will affect it with pain, and, on the contrary, to deny all that which we imagine will affect it with pleasure (E. 3/26; p. 101). |
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Love and hatred are not finished in themselves; they are emotions (motions!) with a direction: "they carry the mind to something farther. Love is always follow'd by a desire of the happiness of the person belov'd, and an aversion to his misery"(ib. p. 416). The 'desires' love and hatred are in fact nothing but our thoughts of the motions in our body under the influence of impacts from other bodies. They vary with each variation in the file of our impressions. By this statement Hume subscribes for the second time to Spinoza's famous and much decried identity-thesis.⁹⁸

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| As nature has given to the body certain appetites and inclinations which she encreases, diminishes, or changes according to the situation of the fluids or solids, she has proceeded in the <i>same</i> manner with the mind (Tr. 2.2.6; p. 416). | The order and connection of ideas is the <i>same</i> as the order and connection of things (E. 2/7; p. 42). [correlation <i>affectiones – affectus</i> and <i>impressions – passions</i>] |
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And concerning an other element of the previous quotation from this page, namely Hume's heavy emphasis on the desire as the constitutive feature of our passions, he again recovers a hard core of Spinoza's theory of the passions, as it may become clear from his definition of *cupiditas*, which he puts at the head of a series of definitions of 48 passions at the end of *Ethica* 3, as if he would like to stamp on our mind, that passions are but its variations. "*Desire is the very essence of man* in so far as it is conceived as determined to do something as an effect of some given modification of itself" (p. 127).⁹⁹ The desire in question is not a kind of wishing, but an actual willing and striving after something, in the sense of trying to realize the things imagined. "We endeavour to promote (*conamur promovere ut fiat*) the coming into existence of everything that we imagine conducive to pleasure; but what we

⁹⁸ For the first time, see our section 7.

⁹⁹ In the translation of Parkinson I have changed the 'by' into 'as an effect of' in order to better catch the meaning of the difficult Latin construction: "*Cupiditas est ipsa hominis essentia, quatenus ex data quacumque eius affectione determinata concipitur ad aliquid agendum*".

find repugnant to it, or, conducive to pain, we endeavour to remove or destroy” (3/28; p. 103). Love and hatred not only have causes, they also have effects. Loving somebody, we will (*indicativum futurum*) be benevolent to him. Hating somebody we will become angry on him.

The friend of Hume, who never studied Spinoza, must be stupefied by the many ties between his theory of the passions and Spinoza’s. Hume paraphrases Spinoza. With his fascinating style he even succeeds in embellishing Spinoza’s propositions.

23. Company preferred above solitude

In a part on love and hatred everything has, of course, to do with relations to other persons. Spinoza paid much attention to various forms of intersubjectivity, Hume in his wake not less. We will not be surprised, therefore, to find on this field more reminiscences of the first author.

A very striking one is our tendency to generalize unduly and to demonize whole groups, families or peoples, as bad company on account of the behaviour of one of their parts. This is a thing, which often happens today in our Western society, where we are confronted with so many immigrants from different cultures and with another religion (Islam).

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| When we either love or hate any person, the passions seldom continue within their first bounds; but extend themselves towards all the contiguous objects, and comprehend the friends and relations of him we love or hate... A quarrel with one person gives us a hatred for the whole family, tho’ entirely innocent of that, which displeases us (Tr. 2.2.2; p. 391) | If any one has been affected with pleasure or pain by another person of a class or nation different from his own, and that accompanied by the idea of that person under the universal name of that class or nation as the cause of the pleasure or pain, he will love or hate not only that person, but all of that class or nation (E. 3/46; p. 115). |
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The demonstration of this proposition consists of nothing else than a reference to the previous proposition 3/16 about our participating in attitudes and passions of other people. This proposition was certainly also shared by Hume, who so much admires Spinoza’s theory of sympathy.

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| ... resemblance must very much contribute to make us enter into the sentiments of others and embrace them with facility and pleasure (Tr. 2.1.11; p. 368). | From the fact alone that we imagine a thing to have something similar to an object which is wont to affect the mind with pleasure or pain, although that in which the thing is similar to the object be not the efficient cause of those emotions, nevertheless we shall hate or love it (3/16; p. 96). |
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Hume’s addition in the previous quotation (‘though entirely innocent of that, which displeases us’) demonstrates that he has precisely Spinoza’s 3/16 in mind, in which it is said that the object we hate on account of its similarity with another hated object/person needs not to be the efficient cause of our hatred.

Hume himself was a very social man and loved company. He meditates about this subject in his section 2.2.4 on 'the love of relations'. "Whoever is united to us by any connexion is always sure of a share of our love, proportion'd to the connexion, without enquiring into his other qualities. Thus the relation of blood produces the strongest tie the mind is capable of in the love of parents to their children ... We love our country-men, our neighbours, those of the same trade, profession..." (ib. p. 401).

Acquaintance with other people is as such a first class value, which brings us many advantages. About this point Hume writes one of his finest pages, which, however, is again inspired by Spinoza. It is a protest against people who systematically prefer solitude above company.

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| <p>Those who take a pleasure in declaiming against human nature, have observ'd that man is altogether insufficient to support himself; and that when you loosen all the holds, which he has of external objects, he immediately drops down into the deepest <i>melancholy</i> and despair.... I own the mind to be insufficient, of itself, to its own entertainment, and that it naturally seeks after foreign objects, which may produce a lively sensation, and agitate the spirits. On the appearance of such an object it awakes, as it were, from a dream: the blood flows with a new tide: The heart is elevated: And the whole man acquires a vigour, which he cannot command in his <i>solitary</i> and calm moments. Hence <i>company is so naturally rejoicing</i>, as presenting the liveliest of all objects, viz. a rational and thinking Being like ourselves, who communicates to us all the actions of his mind (Tr. 2.2.4; p. 402). A perfect <i>solitude</i> is perhaps the greatest punishment we can suffer. Every pleasure languishes when enjoy'd apart from company" (2.2.5; p. 412).</p> | <p>What we have just shown is borne witness to by experience daily with such convincing examples that it has become a proverb: Man is a God to man (<i>homo homini deus</i>). Yet it rarely happens that men live under the guidance of reason, but among them things are in such a state that they are usually envious of or a nuisance to each other. But nevertheless they are scarcely able to lead a <i>solitary</i> life, so that to many the definition of man as a <i>social man</i> has been very attractive; and in truth things are so ordered that from the common society of men far more conveniences arise than the contrary. Let satirists therefore laugh to their hearts' content at human affairs, let theologians revile them and let the melancholy praise as much as they can the rude and uncultivated life; let them despise men and admire the brutes – despite all this, men will find by experience that they can procure with mutual aid far more easily what they need, and avoid far more easily the perils which beset them on all sides, by united forces (E. 4/35s; p. 164).</p> |
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Hume plagiarises Spinoza's outburst against satirists who despise human culture and against primitive hermits who think they can best live alone. He is not the Rousseau of the *Emile*, with whom he later would clash, when he conversed with him in France and in England. His opening sentence ('Those who take pleasure in disclaiming') is an echo of Spinoza's: 'let satirists laugh to'). Spinoza's '*homo homini deus*' returns in Hume's description of man as 'the liveliest of all objects' !

Hume's plea for enjoying life in all its facets and avoiding melancholy reminds the reader of Spinoza's text of another famous passage, which likewise must have been a source for him:

Nothing, therefore, save gloomy and mirthless superstition prohibits delight. For why is it more becoming to satisfy hunger and thirst than to dispel *melancholy*? My reasoning is this, and so I have resolved: No deity, nor any one save the envious, is pleased with my want of power or my misfortune... To make use of things and take delight in them as much as possible (not indeed to satiety, for that is not to take delight) is the part of a the wise man. It is, I say, the part of a wise man to feed himself with moderate pleasant food and drink, and to take pleasure with perfumes, with the beauty of growing plants, dress, music, sports and theatres, and other things of this kind which man may use without any hurt to his fellows (E. 4/45s; p. 173).

The presence in Hume's text of the word 'melancholy' and his accent on the value of entertainment are significant.

24. Counterfeited virtues: pity and malice

The Christian tradition prescribes compassion as a moral obligation. Confronted with poor, sick or destitute people we ought to help them according to the Sermon on the Mountain. The secular tradition of the Romans is different and teaches that compassion is a weakness we should avoid. What is the advice of our two hero's ? It will not be a surprise that they choose the side of the heathens. Spinoza is rather harsh, Hume not less.

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| <p>But tho' the desire of the happiness or misery of others, according to the love or hatred we bear them, be an arbitrary and original instinct implanted in our nature, we find it may be <i>counterfeited</i> on many occasions, and <i>may arise from secondary principles</i>. <i>Pity</i> is a concern for, and <i>malice</i> a joy in the misery of others, without any friendship or enmity to occasion this concern or joy... It will be easy to explain the passion of pity, from the precedent reasoning concerning <i>sympathy</i>.... All human creatures are related to us by resemblance. Their persons, therefore, their interests, their passions, their pains and pleasures <i>must strike</i> upon us in a lively manner, and produce an emotion similar to the original one (Tr. 2.2.7; p. 417-418).</p> | <p>He who imagines that which he loves to be affected by pleasure or pain, will also be affected by pleasure or pain ... Prop. 3/21 explains to us what is pity (<i>commiseratio</i>), which we may define as pain arisen from the hurt of another... It must be noted that we pity not only a thing we have loved (as showed in Prop. 21) but also one which we have regarded hitherto without emotion, provided that we judge it similar to ourselves... (p. 100). Pity in a man who lives under the guidance of reason is in itself bad and useless... He who rightly knows that all things follow from the necessity of the divine nature and come about according to the eternal laws and rules of nature,... will not feel compassion...But he who is moved neither by reason nor pity to help others is rightly called inhuman, for he seems to be unlike a man (4/50; p. 175).</p> |
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My composition on the right side of this table aimed at the construction of a full parallel to the quotation from Hume, which stressed idem ditto the naturalness of compassion in normal creatures. Together with Spinoza he also underlines that pity and malice, apart from having their roots in our constitution, originate from a second motive we are subjected to, namely our inclination to participate in the sentiments of our fellows, the more so as they

are more similar to us. It is our nature plus sympathy, which *produces* our reproductive and adaptive behaviour. Some people would like to call it not without reason improper behaviour. Nevertheless it is unavoidable for humans who have not yet reached the high level of living under the guide of reason.

“Women and children are most subject to pity” (p. 418), is Hume’s partly incorrect conclusion. Also in this respect he was debit to Spinoza, who talked, without surmising his incorrectness, about ‘*muliebri misericordia*’ (female pity) (*Ethica* 2 in fine, p. 82). Why? They are most guided by their imagination: “[this] infirmity makes them faint at the sight of a naked sword, tho’ in the hands of their best friend, makes them pity extremely those, whom they find in any grief or affliction” (p. 418). The prejudice is common to Hume and Spinoza. At first we would perhaps not be inclined to consider also malice as a counterfeited virtue. Nevertheless it is the same kind of deviation. Hume had a perfect understanding of Spinoza’s text.

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| <i>Malice</i> imitates the effects of hatred, as pity does those of love and gives us a joy in the sufferings and miseries of others, without any offence or injury on their part (Tr. 2.2.8; p. 420). ¹⁰⁰ | Cruelty or savageness (<i>crudelitas seu saevitas</i>) is the desire whereby any one is incited to do harm to one whom we love or whom we pity (<i>Ethica</i> 3/df.38; p. 137). More especially if he who loves is thought to have given no normal cause for hatred (3/41cs; p. 113). |
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How can an ordinary man enjoy the misery of other people? What else can be his motive than the increase of his own pleasure? Indeed, this is the explication of our both ‘scientists’ of man.

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| The misery of another gives us a more lively idea of our happiness. And his happiness of our misery. The former, therefore, produces delight; and the latter uneasiness (Tr. 2.2.8; p. 423) | He will feel pleasure who imagines what he hates to be affected with pain; if, on the other hand, he imagines it to be affected with pleasure, he will feel pain (3/23; p.100). |
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In this case Hume explains *why* we enjoy the misery or envy the happiness of our fellows. The comparison makes us feel better or worse. “Envy is excited by some present enjoyment of another, which by comparison diminishes our idea of our own: Whereas malice is the unprovok’d desire of producing evil to another, in order to reap a pleasure from the comparison”(p. 425). He finds a wonderful name for envy: ‘Pity reverst’!

‘Comparison’ is a magic word in the context of this treatise and not without reason. In an inserted excursion Hume illustrates its role by means of a physiological example he probably devised himself. When we put a heat and a cold hand in the same water, it will feel cold to the one hand and hot to the other. This means that the sensation of the temperature in our environment depends on the temperature of our body; temperature, therefore, is a relative quality and does not exist on itself alone. But this is also true for most emotions we normally don’t conceive as arising from a physical basis.

¹⁰⁰ This is one of the very scarce places where Hume makes use of Spinoza’s typical expression ‘affectuum *imitatio*’ instead of his own choice ‘sympathy’.

In order to understand the point Hume now wants to make, we have first to learn how Spinoza defines pleasure and pain. “I shall understand by pleasure the passion by which the mind passes to a higher state of perfection and by pain the passion by which the mind passes to a lower state of perfection” (E. 3/11s; p. 93). The concept *transition* is essential for body and mind in their unity. “Whatever increases or diminishes, helps or hinders the power of action of our body, the idea thereof increases or diminishes, helps or hinders the power of thinking of our mind” (3/11). The implication of this capital proposition is that the increase or decrease of the power of our mind/body may be the same, independent of the low or high degree of its power on/to which it happens. It is precisely on this Spinozistic foundation that Hume comes to his not so well formulated assessment of a possible identity between sensations on different degrees of the quality in question.

A small degree of any quality, succeeding a greater, produces the *same sensation*, as if less than it really is, and even sometimes as the opposite quality. Any gentle pain, that follows a violent one, seems as nothing, or rather becomes a pleasure; as on the other hand a violent pain, succeeding a gentle one, is doubly grievous and uneasy (Tr. 2.2.8; p. 421).

Hume’s intention is more than clear. The same thing can be felt as a great or small pleasure in various persons. This depends on the power of their bodies (Spinoza) or the preceding impression, which, of course, changed the power of the bodies (Hume). The respective sensations are perceptions of a proportion. Is our organism in a miserable situation, a heavy new attack will of course increase the pain; but this onslaught will proportionally more easily be suffered than when a healthy organism has to process the same attack. Reverse, a pleasant circumstance will not add much to the wellbeing of a person who drowns in luxury, but will be of great value for the poor and destitute person whose low degree of power is considerably increased by it. What produces a satisfaction to the one may be boring for another. Objects can make a completely different impression in spite of the fact, that “the eyes refract the rays of light, and the optic nerves convey the images to the brain in the very same manner” (ib. 421). It all depends on who we are and how our bodies are constituted beforehand. We, humans, are a certain but always varying degree of motion; the increase or diminishment of this degree by an impact of degree x must, therefore, be variously experienced.

25. Partnership and competition

Hume is endlessly transcribing into English and explaining Spinoza’s paradoxical propositions. His statements on benevolence and anger are replica’s of Spinoza’s statements. In section 2.2.9 he rephrases and illustrates a couple of Spinoza’s propositions in *economical* terms. He asks his reader to suppose that two persons of the same trade seek employment in a town, that is not able to maintain both: “it is plain the success of one is perfectly incompatible with that of the other and that whatever is for the interest of either is contrary to that of his rival and so vice versa” (p. 431). Then he is requested to suppose that two merchants, though living in different parts of the world, enter into co-partnership together: “the advantage or loss of one becomes immediately the advantage or loss of his partner, and the same fortune necessarily attends both” (ib.).

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| Hatred always follows upon the contrariety | When something is sought by all, they all |
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| of interests (p. 431). The pleasure and advantage of an antagonist necessarily causes my pain and loss (ib.) | oppose each other, and while all wish to be praised or loved by all, they <i>hate</i> each other (3/31cs;p. 106). If we imagine any one to enjoy anything which only one can possess, we shall endeavour to bring it about that he does not possess it (3/32) ¹⁰¹ If any one imagines that the thing [woman, wk] loved is joined to another than himself with the same or a closer bond of friendship than that which binds it to him, he will be affected with hatred towards the object loved, and envy towards the other (3/35). |
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The reverse is the case in a partnership:

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| Love arises from a union (of interests). ¹⁰² The success of a partner rejoices me, but then his misfortunes afflict me in an equal proportion (ib. p. 431). Our concern for our own interest gives us a pleasure in the pleasure, and a pain in the pain of a partner (p. 432). | He will be saddened who imagines that which he loves to be destroyed; if he imagines it to be preserved he feels pleasure (3/19; p. 98). ¹⁰³ |
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It cannot be accidental that Spinoza as well as Hume continue now writing about the *relation between the sexes*. In the previous discussion love and hatred appeared to be ‘mixed feelings’, very often love and hatred together. The title of 2.2.9 was, therefore, ‘Of the mixture of benevolence and anger with compassion and malice’. Also the ‘amorous passion’, as Hume names love between the sexes in 2.2.11, is an example of ‘compound passions’. Amorousness is “a connexion betwixt the sense of beauty, the bodily appetite, and benevolence” (p. 442). Spinoza deals in this case with another aspect of the sexual relation, namely its being often the occasion for envy. In the note to the above quoted 3/35 he writes: “For he who imagines that a woman he loves prostitutes herself to another, not only feels pain because his own desire is hindered but also ... is turned from her.. He will be saddened”.

26. No essential difference between man and other animals

One of the most striking features of Hume’s radical enlightenment is his strong emphasis on the equality between man and other animals as concerns their faculty of reasoning and their behaviour. Spinoza had shortly touched the subject with his assertion that what he writes about the attributes thought and extension is valid for all kinds of beings. “For those things we have so far propounded have been altogether general and have not appertained more to

¹⁰¹ In the translation of 3/32cs I changed ‘this’ into ‘something’ in order to generalize the statement for convenience sake (without, of course, changing its meaning).

¹⁰² There exists no precise equivalent for this atomic sentence in Spinoza’s text, but its contents is certainly the foundation of his political theory. See 4/35c2 and 4/37s2.

¹⁰³ The ‘id quod amat’ of this proposition can as well be read referring to a person as to a thing.

man than to other individual things which are all, though in various degrees, animate (*animata*)” (2/13cs). He does not say that man possesses the highest degree of life and thought. That ‘*animata*’ must be meant as ‘thinking’ (*cogitantia*), was written by one of Spinoza’s intimates in the margin of this text. And with right, because ‘*animata*’ is conceived as an instance of ‘*mens*’ in the first line of the annotation, which in its turn is a part or mode of the infinite and universally present attribute of thinking. We are now authorized to construct the following table.

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| No truth appears to me more evident, than that beasts are endow’d with thought and reason as well as men (Tr. 1.3.16; p. 226) | For those things we have so far propounded have been altogether general and have not appertained more to man than to other individual things which are all, though in various degrees, thinking (2/13cs; p. 49). |
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That a superiority of man does not belong to Spinoza’s logic, in spite of his focus on man, becomes more than clear in his further explication. “And so for the sake of determining in what the human mind differs from other things, and in what it excels other things, we must know the nature of its object, as we said, that is, the human body ... This, however, I will say in general, that according as a body is more apt than others for performing or for receiving many actions at the same time, so is its mind more apt than others for perceiving many things at the same time: and according as the actions of a body depend more on itself alone, and according as fewer other bodies concur with its action, so its mind is more apt for distinct understanding” (ib.). It all depends, therefore, on one’s physical aptitude or equipment for receiving signals and acting correspondingly. Again, we must not misunderstand this fundamental elucidation. Spinoza does not claim man’s superiority above other animals; he only speaks about his *eventual* superiority above other ‘things’, depending on whether his body is better fitted out. His decisive sentence is conditional. The respective phrase ‘*quidque reliquis praestet*’ (in what it excels other things) is, therefore, in the margin quite correctly annotated and completed by the same intimate with ‘*vel cedat*’ (or remains behind them).¹⁰⁴ Hume had not known Spinoza personally, but became an intimate by his thorough reflection on Spinoza’s text and drew the right conclusion. Hume writes enchantingly about ‘instances of sagacity’ of a bird, “that chooses with such care and nicety the place and materials of her nest, and sits upon her eggs for a due time, and in suitable season, with all the precaution that a chymist is capable of in the most delicate projection” and comes to the astonishing and historically unique statement, that similar actions “proceed from a *reasoning*, that is not in itself different, nor founded on different principles, from that which appears in human nature” (p. 227). In his book on the passions Hume returns to the subject: “Everything is conducted by springs and principles, which are not peculiar to man” (Tr. 2.2.12; p. 444). The behaviour of animals is said to be dominated by the same mechanisms as man’s behaviour: “It is evident, that sympathy or the communication of passions, takes place among animals, no less than among men. Fear, anger, courage, and other affections are frequently communicated from one animal to another, without their knowledge of that cause, which produced the original passion” (in. p.

¹⁰⁴ These text-corrections are retrievable in the well known copy of the *Opera Posthuma* of the university library in Leiden and are made by a very close friend and follower of Spinoza. See my http://www.benedictusdespinoza.nl/lit/Klever_RANDGLOSSEN_pdf.

445). The young philosopher was courageous and went further than anybody else, but always on Spinoza's foundations.

27. Hume's physics

In our sections 11 and 17 we dealt already with parts of Hume's physics. Now we have to broach this subject again, because Hume himself returns to it in his marvellous section 2.3.1 on 'liberty and necessity'. As a Spinoza friend and scholar I feel a shudder of admiration when reading the wonderful and unsurpassable pages of the congenial pupil that his secret master could not have improved.

Hume fires away with an absolutely axiomatic statement about the everywhere adhered to presupposition of science. Not alone this, he also specifies in one breath its consequences for our conceiving motion as doubly determined: in its degree and its direction.

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| It is universally acknowledg'd, 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. Every object is determin'd by an absolute fate to a certain degree and direction of its motion, and can no more depart from that precise line, in which it moves, than it can convert itself into an angel, or spirit, or any superior substance (Tr. 2.3.1; p. 448). | In the universe there exists nothing contingent, but all things are determined by the necessity of divine nature to exist and operate in a certain way (E. 1/29; p. 25). A body moves only on account of the impulse of another body (PPC 2/8s; p. 274). For all bodies are surrounded by others and are <i>reciprocally</i> determined to exist and to act in a fixed and determinate way (Letter 32; p. 194). |
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Two remarks have to be made on this selection. First, Hume's unconditional statement on universal determinism does not, of course, imply that we know *how precisely* bodies are determined by other bodies to their behaviour. This clausal he shares with Spinoza as we saw earlier.¹⁰⁵

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| We can never penetrate so far into the essence and construction of bodies, as to perceive the principle, on which their <i>mutual</i> influence depends (ib. p. 448). | I say expressly that the mind has no adequate but only confused knowledge of its body and of external bodies... (2/29s; p. 63). ¹⁰⁶ |
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An equally important remark concerns the 'mutual influence' of bodies, wherewith Hume seems to subscribe to Spinoza's secular position, as he explained it in his letter 32. Bodies exist and operate by mutual conditioning according to "the uniformity and regular operation of natural principles" (p. 449), instead of by the (pro)creation of a putative first Mover. The subsequent application of this affirmation is more than interesting from a historical point of view, because it is clearly an answer to an objection made by Locke. This great philosopher, likewise intoxicated by Spinoza and likewise influenced by his physics and an upholder of

¹⁰⁵ See our section 11.

¹⁰⁶ The following part of this quote says that we *do* have adequate knowledge of bodies by means of our common notions, born from the comparison of our confused ideas; but they don't give us any precise knowledge of the causes and principles of a concrete body. See the quotes in section 11.

the theory that motion can only originate from an impulse of other bodies, makes an objection to Spinoza's theory of cohesion. This theory is implied in his definition of an individual: "when a number of bodies of the same or different size are so *restrained by others* (*a reliquis ita coërcentur*) that they are in reciprocal contact with each other ..., those bodies are called reciprocally united bodies and we say that they all form one body or individual".¹⁰⁷ Locke's objection is in fact an accusation of '*petitio principii*':

For though the pressure of the particles of air may account for the *cohesion* of several parts of matter that are grosser than the particles of air, and have pores less than the corpuscles of air, yet the weight or pressure of the air will not explain, nor can be a cause of, the coherence of the particles of air themselves. ... So that that hypothesis, how ingeniously soever explained ... leaves us in the dark concerning the cohesion of the parts of the corpuscles of the aether itself.¹⁰⁸

Now it will be possible to understand Hume's subtle reference to the problem of his predecessor. "We must certainly allow, that the cohesion of the parts of matter arises from natural and necessary principles, *whatever difficulty we may find in explaining them*". Cohesion needs not to be a problem for whoever well realizes 'the mutual action of the elements and powers of nature', as Hume did after Spinoza. Hume further digresses over this point by stretching the physical explanation of cohesion and individuality towards an explanation of whatever kind of society: "human society is founded on like principles" (ib. p. 449). When small or great material particles come together and form a unity, it is always as an effect of coercion by external powers. The metaphor he then invokes was used by Locke in the same context, who on his turn was inspired to it by an experiment of Spinoza!¹⁰⁹ "For is it more certain that two flat pieces of marble will unite together, than that two young savages of different sexes will copulate?" (ib. p. 450). Human behaviour is dominated by the same laws as occurrences in non-human nature. "Are the products of *Guienne* and of *Champagne* more regularly different than the sentiments, actions, and passions of the two sexes?" (p. 449). Wherever we see a unity, its parts must be considered to be forced unto. So all forms of society are necessitated. Idealistic philosophers had entirely wrong ideas about their origin, as if a society could be the effect of an intellectual device or a moral obligation. "People exactly of the same character with those in Plato's republic on the one hand, or those in Hobbes *Leviathan* on the other" don't cohere on that account to a stable society. Hume lifts a tip of the veil over his radical political theory!¹¹⁰

One of Hume's most exciting and also fundamental propositions, already quoted earlier, is what he now writes after the foregoing discussion: "in judging of the actions of men we must proceed upon the same maxims, as when we reason concerning external objects" (p. 451). A true science of man, as Hume pretends to offer us, cannot be built on particular confused impressions in our conscience, but has to rest only on the save foundation of the common and clear notions resulting from their comparison. They constitute our highest

¹⁰⁷ See definition after 2/13 (p. 51).

¹⁰⁸ See ECHU 2.23.23 and my *John Locke* o.c. section 43 ("Materie en cohesie"), p. 80.

¹⁰⁹ See ECHU 2.23.24 and the same section 43.

¹¹⁰ For Spinoza's anti-platonism see KV 1/6, E 4/pref., Letter 56 and cf. my *Spinoza classicus. Antieke bronnen van een moderne denker* (Budel 2005). For Spinoza's anti-Hobbesianism see TTP 16 (*Hobbes aliter*), Letter 50 and cf. D. Bostrenghi (ed.), *Hobbes e Spinoza. Scienza e politica* (Napoli 1992).

degree of evidence. All phenomena have to be explained by *deduction* from this set of insights. Hume now gives a *methodological lesson*, just as Spinoza had done in chapters 5 and 7 of the TTP.

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| <p>When any phaenomena are constantly and invariably conjoin'd together, they acquire such a connexion in the imagination, that it passes from one to the other, without any doubt or hesitation. But below this there are many inferior degrees of evidence and probability, nor does one single contrariety of experiment entirely destroy all our reasoning. The mind balances the contrary experiments, and <i>deducing the inferior from the superior, proceeds with that degree of assurance or evidence, which remains</i>. Even when these contrary experiments are entirely equal, we remove not the notion of causes and necessity; but supposing that the usual contrariety proceeds from the operation of contrary and conceal'd causes, we conclude, that the chance or indifference lies only in our judgment on account of our imperfect knowledge, not in the things themselves, which are in every case equally necessary, tho' to appearance not equally constant or certain (p. 451).</p> | <p>If anyone wishes to persuade his fellow for or against anything which is not self-evident, he must deduce his contention from their admissions, and convince them either by experience or by ratiocination; either by appealing to facts of natural experience, or to self-evident intellectual axioms. Now unless the experience be of such a kind as to be clearly and distinctly understood, though it may convince a man, it will not have the same effect on his mind and disperse the clouds of his doubt so completely as when the doctrine taught is <i>deduced</i> entirely from intellectual axioms – that is, by the mere power of the understanding and logical order ... But the <i>deduction of conclusions from general truths</i> usually requires a long chain of arguments, and, moreover, very great caution, acuteness, and self-restraint ...(TTP 5; p. 77).</p> <p>The method of interpreting scripture does not differ from the method of interpreting nature... consisting in the examination of the history of nature, and <i>deducing</i> definitions of natural phenomena from certain fixed axioms (TTP 7; p. 99).</p> |
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Spinoza's and Hume's expositions on scientific method show minor differences on account of the various situations in which they were formulated, but agree in the main thing, namely that empirical questions can only be effectively explained by deduction from high level knowledge and evident principles. What remains inconsistent with intuitional evidence (like liberty with necessity) has to be rejected as being false.

Hume's mind must have been bewildered to an ecstatic admiration of Spinoza when writing the pages on necessity. Without taking precautions he appropriates essential parts of his theory. Speaking not in general, but specifically about man, he not only underlines the unity of mind and body (as confessed previously)¹¹¹ but also the congruence of their necessary processes. To substantiate the latter part of this statement (necessity) I add a proposition of the first part of the *Ethics*, whose parallel was probably one of those removed 'noble parts'!

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| <p>There is no known circumstance, that enters into the connexion and production of the</p> | <p>Whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human mind must be</p> |
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¹¹¹ See my section 6.

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| actions of matter, that is not to be found in all the operations of the mind; and consequently we cannot without a manifest absurdity, attribute necessity to the one, and refuse it to the other (ib. p. 452) | perceived by the human mind. Or the idea of that thing must necessarily exist in the human mind: that is, if the object of the idea constituting the human mind be the body, <i>nothing can happen in that body which is not perceived by the mind</i> (E. 2/12; p. 48). ¹¹² |
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But after these excursions into methodology and the mind-body unity Hume returns, and we with him, to physics properly. It appears that he adheres to Spinoza's radical mechanicism. Above we quoted already his statement about physical determinism by mutual dependence. This is now specified in this sense that all kinds of motion are the effect of a physical impact. "Motion in one body in all past instances, that have fallen under our observation, is follow'd upon impulse by motion in another" (ib. p. 453). In EHU he later twice emphasizes that motion can only originate from impulse. '*Communication of motion by impulse*' is called an 'ultimate principle' in EHU no. 47 and in no. 40 the '*production of motion by impulse*' will be considered 'an universal law'. This principle is so central to our way of thinking and is therefore so steady, that we cannot think otherwise about nature without becoming totally disorientated. It is interesting to see that in this context Hume and Locke illustrate our ignorance about how precisely nature works in special cases, with the same reference to the working of 'rhubarb' (EHU no. 47; ECHU 4.3.25).

In the light of Hume's radical mechanicism it is also interesting to discover how he opposes against Newton's concept of a '*vis inertiae*' in a long footnote to EHU no. 57 (p. 73).¹¹³ Newton (and also Descartes) ascribed such a power to matter ('which is ascribed to matter'). Inertia is certainly a fact of our experience. "We find by experience, that a body at rest or in motion continues for ever in its present state, till put from it by some new cause; and that a body impelled takes as much motion from the impelling body as it acquires itself. These are facts". But then comes Hume's benevolent exposition: "when we call this a *vis inertiae* we only [!, wk] mark these facts, without pretending to have any idea of the inert power". That is a kind formulation for hidden critique. A *vis inertiae* (or *vis insita*) as a power responsible for a specific action would be in straight conflict with the principles of radical mechanicism, Were 'faculties' not on equal foot with 'occult qualities' to be banished from a science of man?¹¹⁴ In order not to loose our way in a 'fairy land' we have to keep to our fundamental principle of 'motion only by impulse'. The descent of heavy objects may not be explained by imaginative attraction of the earth, but by impulse from other bodies. Hume, then, friendly protects his great fellow scientist: "that great philosopher had recourse to an ethereal active fluid to explain his universal attraction, though he was so cautious and modest as to allow, that it was a mere hypothesis" (ib. p. 73). For Hume himself it would never be possible to confirm such a hypothesis by experience, since it is in flagrant contradiction with the most fundamental principle of his Spinozistic physics, which pertinently excludes a power of

¹¹² Compare again E. 1/29 quoted earlier in this section on Hume's physics.

¹¹³ See definition 3 in *Principia Mathematica Philosophiae Naturalis* (1987): "The *vis insita*, or innate force of matter, is a power of resisting by which every body, as much as in it lies, continues in its present state, whether it be of rest or of moving uniformly forward in a right line" in H. S. Thayer, *Newton's Philosophy of Nature. Selections from his writings* (London 1953) p. 12.

¹¹⁴ See my section 14.

inertia.¹¹⁵ The only way for undeceiving us and becoming freed from our illusory concepts is to seek it higher up and explain strange facts (like gravity) by *deducing* them from undoubted and indubitable principles, as Hume had taught us in his methodological lesson. Just as an independent faculty or power of resisting is inconceivable in Hume's system, so also an independent faculty of acting somewhere in the universe, for instance in man. The section on 'liberty and necessity' came to its summit in the statement: "Now I assert, that whoever reasons after this manner, does *ipso facto* believe the actions of the will to arise from necessity, and that he knows not what he means, when he denies it" (p. 453). Man's actions are motions of his body or of other bodies; motions are the effect of external impulse. The word 'believe' in the quoted statement is a weak understatement for the high maxim of universal causality, which belongs to our intuition. This insight is continually confirmed by experience. Hume gives a few examples from daily life and from history: it runs "through politics, war, commerce, economy and indeed mixes itself so entirely in human life, that 'tis impossible to act or subsist a moment without having recourse to it"(p. 453).

28. Illusory character of our freedom feeling

In their science of man Spinoza and Hume deal with man as an *object*, just as they consider other objects, and explain all objects with the same categories. But just as the intuition of causality is undeniable, so also the universality of man's imagination of his liberty. "We *feel* that our actions are subject to our will on most occasions, and *imagine* we feel that the will itself is subject to nothing" (Tr. 2.3.2; p. 456). But this feeling can never become a valid argument in the natural science of man, which builds its theory only on man's externally visible behaviour.

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| We may imagine we feel a liberty within ourselves; but a <i>spectator</i> can commonly infer our actions from our motives and character; and even where he cannot, he concludes in general, that he might, were he perfectly acquainted with every circumstance of our situation and temper, and the most secret springs of our complexions and disposition (ib.). | People are mistaken in thinking themselves free; and this opinion depends on this alone, that they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined (E. 2/35s; p. 65). For if men understood clearly the whole order of Nature, they would find all things just as necessary as are all those treated in Mathematics (CM 2/9; p. 332 |
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Both, Spinoza and Hume, defend determinism with an appeal on the famous Laplacian counterfactual condition, which maintains that if we should know on a certain moment all the circumstances of what happens in nature, we would be able to predict exactly everything forthcoming and would consider acting freely and independently an impossibility. According to the Christian tradition determinism would also be dangerous for the religion. Hume's refutation of this objection is not convincing. What he brings forward are only a few loose considerations in order to show that the doctrine of necessity is not only innocent but even advantageous to religion. He claims to change nothing in the received system of morality. In order to immunise himself he throws sand in the eyes of his opponent by asserting on the one hand that necessity has universally, though tacitly, been allowed in the schools, on the pulpit and in common life and on the other hand that he does not ascribe to

¹¹⁵ See my article "Inertia as an effect" in the forthcoming memorial volume for Richard Popkin.

the will that ‘unintelligible necessity’! Finally his main strategy to invalidate the objection is to demonstrate that those who defend freedom actually contradict themselves. “So inconsistent are men with themselves, that tho’ they often assert, that necessity utterly destroys all merit and demerit either towards mankind or superior powers, yet they continue still to reason upon these very principles of necessity in all their judgments concerning this matter” (Tr. 2.3.2; p. 459). And he concludes the section with a far echo of Spinoza’s very first declaration:

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| I cannot doubt of an entire victory; and therefore having prov’d, that <i>all actions of the will have particular causes</i> , I proceed to explain what these causes are and how they operate (ib. p. 460) | Since, then, the will is nothing more than a mental construction (<i>ens rationis</i>), it can in no way be said to be the cause of this or that volitions. <i>Particular volitions, since they need a cause to exist</i> , cannot be said to be free (Letter 2; p. 63). |
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29. Our behaviour not governed by reason

Hume will explain, therefore, which are ‘the influencing motives of the will’ (section 2.3.3.). The title is misleading, because we don’t have somewhere such a faculty. He nonetheless adapts himself to the customary way of thinking and speaking about faculties, as if they exist. Spinoza was more precise when he wrote about ‘*particulares volitiones*’, particular ‘willings’, not of a fictitious faculty, but of our body, sc. as moving in this or that direction and acting in this or that way.

It is not the first nor the only time that Hume takes this subject in consideration. More than once it is inculcated into our mind “that passions and inclinations actuate and govern (us)” (TR. 1.4.7; p. 318), that our “perception of pain and pleasure (is) the chief spring and moving principle of all (our) actions” (Tr. 1.3.10; p. 167) or that “we are determined by custom” (EHU no. 5; p. 43) to expect or act in a certain way. But this time Hume faces the tradition in a more aggressive manner and makes a more powerful stand against everybody’s natural view that it is the (faculty of) reason, which normally determines and always ought to direct our behaviour. The agreement of this confronting attitude with Spinoza’s equally forceful and similar declaration in this matter cannot escape the serious student, in spite of the fact that most scholars tell us that according to Spinoza we, humans, can and ought to follow the prescripts of reason! The quotes speak for themselves in favour of the historical truth.

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| I shall endeavour to prove first, that reason alone can never be a motive of any action of the will; and secondly, that it can never oppose passion in the direction of the will (Tr. 2.3.3; p. 460-461) Nothing can oppose or retard the impulse of passion, but a contrary impulse ... We speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and of reason. Reason is, and ought only to be the <i>slave</i> of the passions (ib. p. 462). | As such true knowledge of good and bad cannot restrain any passion (<i>nullum affectum coërcere potest</i>) (E. 4/14). A passion (<i>affectus</i>) can neither be hindered nor removed save by a contrary passion and one stronger than the passion which is to be checked (E. 4/7). In these few propositions I have explained the causes of human weakness and inconstancy, and why men do not follow the precepts of reason (E. 4/18s). [Title of <i>Ethica</i> 4:] On human <i>servitude</i> , or the strength of the passions. |
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Hume's only deviation of Spinoza's position is that he states that reason 'ought only to be' the slave of the passion, for which point we cannot find an equivalent in Spinoza's text. It is also a deviation of his own intention to do nothing else than *describe* human behaviour, to which this (de)moralizing remark does not fit. Maybe he was a bit careless in his formulation and only meant to say that reason 'cannot but be the slave of passions'. An obligation ('ought') in this context would leave open the possibility of escaping the coercive power of the passions. I interpret his 'ought' as a slip of his pen.

Fact is that Hume does follow here the headline of Spinoza's argument in *Ethica* 4. And this is a most important theory, not well understood by an army of moralising philosophers.

Hume, therefore, exerts himself to make it acceptable. "When we have the prospect of pain or pleasure from any object, we feel a consequent emotion of aversion or propensity, and are carry'd to avoid or embrace what will give us this uneasiness or satisfaction" (ib. p. 461). The putative reason, which is constituted by the comparison of ideas, does not even come on the scene of our consciousness and plays no role at all. What does have the monopoly in our mind is only our imagination, i.e. the reflection of our impressions. And reason cannot be in conflict with it; on the contrary, reason is essentially the abstract summary of our empirical ideas, its common denominator.

The reverse is likewise true: also facts cannot be in conflict with reason. "It is not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger. 'Tis not contrary to reason for me to chuse my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an Indian or person wholly unknown to me. 'Tis as little contrary to reason to prefer even my own acknowledg'd lesser good to my greater, and have a more ardent affection for the former than the latter" (ib. p. 463).

But as soon as we become wise and really understand the determined character of our passions, it is done with their overpowering domination of our life. Hume now opens surreptitiously a perspective on the contents of the fifth part of Spinoza's *Ethica* and starts filling the second blank spot in his imitation of the *Ethica* matrix.¹¹⁶

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| The moment we perceive the falsehood of any supposition, or the insufficiency of any means our passions yield to our reason without any opposition. I may desire any fruit as of an excellent relish; but whenever you convince me of my mistake, my longing ceases (ib. p. 464). | A passive reaction stops to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it (E. 5/3) Therefore, the more an emotion becomes known to us, the more it is within our power and the less the mind is passive in regard to it (5/3c). |
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This is only a slight anticipation of what Spinoza will deal with in *Ethica* 5 under the head "Concerning the power of the intellect or on human freedom".

As we saw earlier, custom plays a dominant role in the pattern of our reactions. Hume ponders (again) on this topic in section 2.3.5 ("Of the effects of custom"), because it has a direct relation to the subject of liberty and necessity. We act as we are accustomed to by our education, unless by new experiences 'the spirits move in a new direction' (p 470).¹¹⁷ When

¹¹⁶ Cf. our section 3.

¹¹⁷ That Hume discusses the effect of custom in the physiological category of 'animal spirits' and especially their sudden change of direction as an effect of a surprising 'novelty', might have been suggested to him by his reading of the preface of *Ethica* 5, in which Spinoza talked in this way about Descartes' hypothesis of the pineal

this is the case, our ideas turn with them automatically. No philosopher went further than Spinoza in attributing to custom a pervasive and even irresistible influence. “Parents, by reprobating wicked actions and reproving their children on the committal of them, and on the other hand, by persuading to and praising right actions, have brought it about that the former should be associated with pain and the latter with pleasure. This is also confirmed by experience. For custom and religion are not the same to all; but on the contrary, what is sacred to some is profane to others, and what is honourable to some is disgraceful to others. Therefore, according as each has been educated, so he repents of or glories in his actions” (E. 4/df.27e).

It is tantalizing to see in the final paragraph of Hume’s section on the effects of custom a veiled direct reference to Spinoza. He writes: “And this is the reason why custom encreases all active habits, but diminishes passive, according to the *observation of a late eminent philosopher*” (ib. p. 471). Locke, Berkeley, Hobbes will not be the intended philosopher; Hume would certainly have given the name behind his praise. Spinoza alone could not be mentioned explicitly, whereas his description of the effects of custom is a precise match to Hume’s analysis. Besides: who else could have gotten the title of ‘eminent’ in the eyes of him, who is so utterly enthusiastically presenting Spinoza’s science of man and no one else’s?¹¹⁸

30. Hume’s critique of religion and his dynamic worldview

When Hume published in 1748 a new version of the first two books of the *Treatise as An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* and *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, he probably thought that time was ripe for receiving the radicalising theological chapters “Of Miracles” and “Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State”. P. Millican has argued that these chapters form a unity and constitute probably the ‘noble parts’ cancelled in the earlier published *Treatise*.¹¹⁹

That miracles can have no place in Hume’s epistemologically justified science of nature is evident. We don’t know the structure of reality nor the mechanisms according to which it works, but on account of our constant experience we are sure that everything has a cause and cannot work but according to the general and inexorable laws of the universe.

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| There (is) no such thing as <i>Chance</i> in the world (EHU no. 46; p. 56). <i>No contingency anywhere in the universe; no indifference; no liberty. While we act, we</i> | <i>In the universe there exists nothing contingent, but all things are determined by the necessity of divine nature to exist and operate in a certain way (E. 1/29; p. 25).</i> |
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glandular. This organ would be moved this or that way by the *spiritus animales* and in according with this motion man would get other ideas. Spinoza condemns this hypothesis “far more occult than all occult qualities”.

¹¹⁸ The reference is comparable with Mandeville’s remark in *Free thoughts on Religion, Church and National Happiness* (1729): “See underneath the opinion of an anonymous author”, which concerns an indubitable crypto-quotation from Spinoza. See my *Bernard Mandeville* (2010), o.c. p. 37. – In the abundantly annotated critical edition of the *Treatise of Human Nature* by David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford University Press 2011, 2 vols) one finds remarkably no remark on the possible or probable identity of the ‘late eminent philosopher’ referred to!

¹¹⁹ See his “The Context, Aims, and Structure of Hume’s First *Enquiry*” in P. Millican ed., *Reading Hume on Understanding. Essays on the first Enquiry* (Oxford 2002).

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| are, at the same time, acted upon (EHU no. 77; p. 99). ¹²⁰ | |
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The miraculous stories of the Scripture, which purport and would justify the rightness of a belief in divine revelation, are incredible, not only because they are in conflict with the maxims of reason, but also because they are too weak and contradict each other. Hume reiterates the refutations of Spinoza's chapter *De Miraculis* in his *Theological-political Treatise* (6) and Locke's chapter *Of the Degrees of Assent* in his *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (4.16).

This contrariety of evidence may be derived from several different causes; from the opposition of contrary testimony; from the character or number of the witnesses; from the manner of their delivering their testimony; or from the union of all these circumstances. We entertain a suspicion concerning any matter of fact, when the witnesses contradict each other; when they are but few, or of a doubtful character, when they have an interest in what they affirm; when they deliver their testimony with hesitation, or on the contrary, with too violent asseverations (EHU 89; p. 112).

But Hume does not entertain illusions about the possibility to convince a believer of his being wrong. His faith, which "subverts all the principles of his understanding [...] gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience (EHU 101; p. 131). He remains obstinate and insensible for arguments, until too many different experiences and lessons of life itself bring him to new insights.

The belief in a particular providence and direction of the world history by a divine creator / engineer and correspondingly in a future state, in which good people would be remunerated and bad people punished, is likewise incompatible with the 'solid principles' of Hume's treatise.¹²¹ On which foundation would we be enforced to conclude the existence of an almighty, good-natured but also cruel, Governor? Because the world must have a cause? It is certainly true and universally acknowledged, that everything must have a cause of its existence, but it is not less true that "the cause must be proportioned to the effect" (EHU 105; p. 136) and that "effects will always correspond to causes" (*Essays* p. 24). An effect is the working of a cause on account of which there must necessarily be a similarity between the cause and the effect. From a given thing we can never rationally conclude to a cause with properties differing from the properties of the effect. This is Hume's explosive dynamite under traditional arguments for the existence of a god *behind* the universe.

So far as the traces of any attributes, at present, appear, so far may we conclude these attributes to exist. The supposition of farther attributes is mere hypothesis; much more the supposition, that, in distant regions of space or periods of time, there has been, or will be, a more magnificent display of these attributes, and a scheme of administration more suitable to such imaginary virtues. We can never be allowed to mount up from the universe, the effect, to Jupiter, the cause; and then descend downwards, to infer any new effect from that cause; as if the present effects alone

¹²⁰ See also the narrowly corresponding quotes of EHU 64 and E. 1/33 in our section 11.

¹²¹ "When, in my philosophical disquisitions, I deny a providence and a future state, I undermine not the foundations of society, but advance principles, which they themselves, upon their own topics, if they argue consistently, must allow to be solid and satisfactory" (EHU 104; p. 135).

were not entirely worthy of the glorious attributes, which we ascribe to that deity. The knowledge of the cause being derived solely from the effect (EHU 106; p. 137).

The appearing attributes (Spinoza's terminology!) are thought and extension: we perceive both and nothing else. "We neither sense nor perceive any particular things save bodies and modes of thinking" (E 2/ac.5).¹²² Therefore we conclude with Spinoza their identification with the divine x. "Thought is an attribute of God, or, God is a thinking thing' (2/1); "Extension is an attribute of God, or, God is an extended thing" (2/2). The cause of our world can, therefore, only be thought of as another thinking extension: a previous world. Whatever is added to or changed in this cause can only be due to the 'wings of imagination' (EHU 107), not the steps of reason. Hume is more than close to Spinoza's 'God or nature'. There is no distance between the appearing attributes and Jupiter. Also ascent and descent are misleading metaphorical concepts.

Reasonable man lets only lead himself by the maxims, i.e. the common denominators, of his experiences. "The experienced train of events is the great standard, by which we all regulate our conduct" (EHU 110; p. 142). An argument for God's existence on the basis of the intelligent design of the world goes always crippled, because we miss the point of comparison, which eventually could enable us to the conclusion of a superb Engineer. When we see footprints or hoof prints in the sand of the beach, we are legitimized to conclude that men or horses were walking here, because we know already the animals that own this type of feet and hoofs. We actually know more than the visible prints. This is not the case when we focus on the universe. We don't possess more knowledge of the universe than the maxims of our constant experience. On the basis of the just above mentioned correspondence between cause and effect, we can only conclude to a similar universe behind our universe, but not to a totally different 'Being'. The cause must possess the same marks that are shown before our eyes, not only order and beauty, but also disorder, disharmony, mutual destruction of parts, disasters, diseases etc. When we see various building materials disorderly placed on a building site, we then know that an architect and a contractor have been at work and may conclude their existence, because we know these professions and are acquainted with their way of working. But this is not the case with the appearances of the world that we never saw originating from the brains of an intelligent designer or a Platonian demiurg.

Continuing this line of Hume's reasoning on the basis of the causality maxim and the necessary correspondence between cause and effect, we can only affirm that our universe is the effect of a dynamical previous universe. We saw already in our section on Hume's physics that he conceives the universe as a world in which all parts operate mutually on each other. This implies, although he does not state this explicitly in this context, that the face of the world varies continuously. Later he will elaborate and defend the permanent transformation of the universe in his *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* by the mouth of Philo. Here, however, the argument scans, as it were, Spinoza's propositions about the development of the universe. "All things which follow from the absolute nature of any attribute of God must exist for ever and infinitely, or, they are eternal and infinite through that same attribute" (E. 1/21). "Whatever follows from an attribute of God, in so far as it is modified by such a modification as exists of necessity and infinitely, through the same, must also exist of necessity and infinitely" (E. 1/22). "Every mode, which of necessity and infinitely exists must of necessity follow either from the absolute nature of some attribute of God, or

¹²² See in our section 6 Hume's equivalent of this Spinozistic axiom.

from some attribute modified by a modification which exists of necessity and infinitely" (E. 1/23). This is a rather complicated way of claiming that the 'creator' of any actual infinite mode of the universe must have been its former actual infinite mode, otherwise there would be an impossible disproportion between cause and effect. To say it in another way: the universe has no external cause. The universe is continuously, in an endless series, cause of itself. An echo of Spinoza's identification of god with nature is shown in EHU 113: "The Deity is known to us only by its productions, and *is a single being in the universe*". Gods are dreams of the phantasy. No wonder that Hume felt sympathy for the classical atheist Epicurus and called his argument '(his) apology for Epicurus' (EHU 113; p. 146).¹²³ An acknowledgement of its pure Spinozistic character would have brought him condemnation and persecution.

31. *The essence of virtue*

The third book/volume of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, which appeared in 1740, is on the title page specified as 'Of Morals'. This title is a bit colourless, because the whole treatise is dedicated to 'moral subjects'. The title of its rewritten version is more specific: '*Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*' (1751). 'Morals' is synonym with our 'behaviour', not with 'behavioural science', for which Hume also uses Aristotle's and Spinoza's word 'ethica'.¹²⁴ Hume does also not intend the principles, which ought to dominate our behaviour according to certain religious or other authorities. In line with the first two books of the *Treatise*, the third book presents *descriptive* science, not normative science, which is according to Hume an impossibility. Remains the solution that the principles discussed in this volume, are the principles, which actually bring about our behaviour and govern it. The similarities between Hume and Spinoza are not limited to epistemology. They are perhaps more obvious in moral and political theory.¹²⁵

Various parts of the morality stuff were treated earlier. Hume announces in the 'advertisement' that this volume can be read separately. Yet he repeats quite a lot of topics already discussed, which contributes to the impression of prolixity in his style. So part 3.2 ("Of virtue and vice in general") partly covers 2.1.7 ("Of vice and virtue"). Nevertheless even this part brings new and often deeper meditation about the subject. Hume is too good a writer for to become boring. The concepts that were already introduced always reappear ornate in new clothes.

My own title above this section looks rather scholastic and archaic. One would not expect such a metaphysical category from a philosopher who purports to build only on visible phenomena. Yet also in previous sections Hume did not avoid pretending to hit the heart of the matter. Already in 2.1.7 (p. 347) he put double heavy emphasis on it, when writing: "The *very essence* of virtue, according to this hypothesis, is to produce pleasure and that of vice to give pain ... The uneasiness and satisfaction are not only inseparable from vice and virtue, but constitute their very *nature and essence*". By this proposition he actually *defines* virtue and vice as qualities of our position in the world or as variants of our power or weakness, not

¹²³ Likewise also Mandeville compared his position ('epitome of Spinozism') with the system of Epicurus. Cf. my *Bernard Mandeville*, o.c. p. 72.

¹²⁴ See *Treatise* 3.1.2 and 3.3.4.

¹²⁵ See for this claim Den Uyl and Rice, "Spinoza and Hume on Individuals", o.c. : "Both thinkers understood that action is grounded in desire and that a mere knowledge of the truth(as true) is not alone sufficient to motivate action"(p. 102). Both philosophers also distinguished between two levels of good: the original level of good as pleasurable or painful for individuals considered in isolation, and the 'secondary' level of good as useful for society, the 'public good'.

as things which would have something to do with insights or might be in conflict with our reason. Virtue – the word is derived from the Latin *vir*=man – is primarily virility or what contributes to it. Vice is its derogation: infirmity. Spinoza's preferred alternative terms are imbecility (*imbecilitas*) and instability (*inconstantia*).

The essence of virtue is clarified in two steps. First by the negative proposition that "moral distinctions are not deriv'd from reason" (title 3.1.1); second, by the positive proposition, which affirms their being "deriv'd from a moral sense" (title 3.1.2). In other words, Hume breaks with the whole of ancient and scholastic philosophy, which maintains the possibility of a rational determination of good and evil. We need not to think or search for acquiring knowledge of moral norms; we feel and experience in our body what is or is not good. This kind of knowledge is only sensitive and relative to ourselves.

The pages Hume writes here are absolutely fascinating and uttermost revolutionary. In the unique source of scientific knowledge, to know the comparison of our sensitive ideas, we never arrive to an '*ought*' from an '*is*' or to a '*not allowed*' from a '*being*'. "The rules of morality, therefore, are not conclusions of our reason" (p. 509). A possible chain of reasoning fails. Hume refers back to his exposition of 2.3.3, in which he had already anticipated this ethical discussion.¹²⁶ He now summarizes that previous section by accentuating the essential incongruence of theoretical and normative affirmations and, therefore, the unbridgeable distance between them. "I have prov'd that reason is perfectly inert, and can never either prevent or produce any action or affection" (p. 509). Conclusions of our reason are true or not; actually striving after something may be effective or not, pleasant or painful, but never true or untrue. As no other pre-modern philosopher Hume has profoundly meditated this point. "Actions ... cannot be reasonable... Moral distinctions, therefore, are not the offspring of reason" (510). Actions cannot be according to reason, because reason cannot prescribe a certain kind of behaviour. Formulations like 'conformity with reason' or 'incompatibility with reason', mainly derived from the Stoa or Scholastic Middle Ages, are not applicable, because actions are concrete and reason is abstract. Reason can never prove a particular thing to have this or that property. "No matter of fact is capable of being demonstrated" (515). Matters of fact can only be experienced, but not established with undeniable certainty. Arguments and feelings will always shove along each other. But is this not an extreme and unacceptable position? Is Nero's matricide not an essential evil, a kind of 'absolute evil' which refutes Hume's thesis? On this objection Hume does not recede an inch. Murder of one's parents is a natural process, which is fully comparable with the suppression and overpowering of an old oak or elm by a shoot from its fruits. "Is not the one tree the cause of the other's existence; and the latter the cause of the destruction of the former, in the same manner as when a child murders his parent? 'Tis not sufficient to reply, that a choice or will is wanting. For in the case of parricide, a will does not give rise to any different relations, but is only the cause from which the action is deriv'd" (p. 519). The supposed 'will or choice', that would make the difference according to general imagination, are in the science of man nothing but "the laws of matter and motion, that determine a sapling to destroy the oak, from which it sprung" (p. 519). For the eyes of the natural scientist there is no essential difference between the behaviour of animals, trees and men and disappears the so called absolute evil as snow before the sun. Hume concludes his ingenious instruction about the unreasonable character of virtue or vice with a disenchanting and universally objectionable analysis, which is too rich and too innovative for not being quoted integrally.

¹²⁶ See our section 20.

Take any action allow'd to be vicious: Wilful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call vice. In which-ever way you take it, you find only certain passions, motives, volitions and thoughts. There is no other matter of fact in the case. The vice entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You never can find it, till you turn your reflection into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action. Here is a matter of fact; but 'tis the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object. So that when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it. Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compared to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which, according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind: and this discovery in morals, like that other in physics, is to be regarded as a considerable advancement of the speculative sciences; tho', like that too, it has little or no influence or practice (Tr. 2.3.1; p. 520).

It is a great intellectual joy to transcribe a ravishing passage like this, which fully covers Spinoza's scientifico-ethical revolution. Hume is his congenial comrade in equalizing the status of concepts like good and evil to our so called secondary qualities, i.e. our perceptions of the primary properties of the physical world. And just like Spinoza he very much realizes that this naturalistic interpretation of moral concepts will hardly affect daily life.¹²⁷ The 'considerable advancement' Hume brags of is, in fact, first realized by Spinoza.

I will not dish up here again the earlier presented material, which proves Spinoza's proposition that our concepts or moral qualities are relativistic or utilitarian. I only wish to add his following exemplification: "As for the terms good and bad, they also mean nothing positive in things considered in themselves, nor are they anything else than modes of thought, or notions, which we form from the comparison of things with each other. For one and the same thing can at the same time be good, bad, and indifferent. E. g., music is good to the melancholy, bad to those who mourn, and neither good nor bad to the deaf" (E. 4/pref.; p. 143).

The example given by Hume illustrates his relativistic thesis and came likewise not out of his own case. In the same context of discussion about good and bad Spinoza memorizes Nero's parricide in Letter 23 to Blijenbergh, who was much scandalized by Spinoza's writing in CM 1/6/7, that "good and bad are said respectively". Spinoza's answer to the Calvinistic opponent, written in his poor Dutch, demonstrates that he considered the so called crimes as physical entities, whose eventual malignity depends only on intersubjective relations. In the *Treatise* Hume does not mention the name Nero, but he does so three times in the EPM, which suggest the influence of Spinoza's conspicuous passage.

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| <p>If the cruelty of Nero be allowed entirely voluntary, and not rather the effect of constant fear and resentment... (EPM 184) But when Nero killed Agrippina all the relations between himself and the person, and all the circumstances of the fact, were</p> | <p>I think I have sufficiently shown that that which constitutes the specific reality of evil, error and villainy does not consist in anything that expresses essence, and therefore it cannot be said that God is its cause. For example, <i>Nero's matricide</i>, in so</p> |
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¹²⁷ Cf., however, my sections 3 and 29.

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| <p>previously known to him; but the motive of revenge, or fear, or interest, prevailed in his savage heart over the sentiments of duty and humanity (EPM 241).</p> <p>A young tree, which over-tops and destroys its parent, stands in all the same relations with Nero, when he murdered Agrippina (EPM 243).</p> | <p>far as it contained something positive, was not a crime (<i>scelus</i>) but only an external action (<i>facinus externum</i>); for Orestes too performed the same outward act and had the same intention of killing his mother, and yet he is not blamed, or at least not as Nero. What then was Nero's crime? Nothing else than that by that deed he showed that he was ungrateful, devoid of compassion and obedience (Letter 23; p. 166).</p> |
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Absolutely decisive in this question is only what we feel and what Hume in his next section will call our '*moral sense*':

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| <p>Moral distinctions deriv'd from a moral sense (title Tr. 3.1.2; p. 522)</p> | <p>Each forms according to his emotion a judgment as to what is good or bad, or what is better or worse (<i>Unusquisque ex suo affectu judicat, quid bonum, quid malum, quid melius, quid peius sit</i>, 3/51s; p. 118).</p> |
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Hume's unconditional rejection of "the system, which establishes eternal rational measures of right and wrong" (p. 523) does not only bring him in the neighbourhood of Spinoza: they fully share this radical and rather paradoxical opposition against the whole Western tradition of philosophy and theology.

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| <p>The distinguishing impressions, by which moral good and evil is known, are nothing but particular pains or pleasures (p. 522)</p> | <p>The knowledge of good and bad is nothing else than the emotion of pleasure or pain, in so far as we are conscious of it (E. 4/8; p. 149).</p> |
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There is no hair's-breadth between Spinoza's and Hume's emotivistic explanation of our moral qualifications. Spinoza's theory could not better have been summarized than by Hume's statement: "Morality, therefore, is more properly felt than judg'd" (p. 522).¹²⁸ It is the automatical reflex of our emotional equipment which constitutes our moral judgments. Both philosophers also oppose the traditional opinion about the relation between what is in moral respect determinative and what is dependent in a phrase, which betrays Hume's debt to Spinoza.

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| <p>The very feeling constitutes our praise or admiration ... We do not infer a character to be virtuous, because it pleases... The case is</p> | <p>It may be gathered from this, then, that we endeavour, will, seek, or desire nothing because we deem it good; but on the</p> |
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¹²⁸ In a forthcoming publication about "Spinoza. Bene e male" Emanuela Scribano writes (and she allows me to quote it): "Questa proposizione afferma in modo inequivoco che la consocenza dei valori morali è interamente riducibile a uno stato emotivo... La filosofia morale di Spinoza appare singolarmente prossima a quella di Hume". Also in her *Guida alla lettura dell'ETICA di Spinoza* (Roma 2008) she emphasizes the affinity between Spinoza and Hume: "La riposte di Spinoza anticipa sia il problema sia la soluzione humeani" (p. 119).

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| the same as in our judgments concerning all kinds of beauty, and tastes, and sensations (p. 523) | contrary, we deem a thing good because we endeavour, will, seek, or desire it (3/9s; p. 92) |
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It is not totally accidental that Hume intentionally describes his own treatise 'of morals' as the 'compleatest system of ethics' (p. 525)! The word 'ethics' is significant here and incites an association to Spinoza's well rounded off treatise. Both refrain themselves to articulate the maxims from which nature's infinite appearances are deducible:

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| [Nature] where a few principles produce all that variety we observe in the universe (p. 525) | Infinite things in infinite ways ... must necessarily follow from the necessity of the divine nature (E. 1/16; p. 17). |
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Never is it permitted to adduce nature as such in order to revile human behaviour. We don't know what causes what. We are not authorized to play off actual and emotionally dominated conduct against natural indicatives. Thorough naturalism à la Spinoza and Hume doesn't allow to call virtue natural and vice unnatural. "For in the first sense of the word 'Nature', as opposed to miracles, both vice and virtue are equally natural (p. 526). On the other hand are virtuous attitudes rather scarce, so that "in the second sense, as oppos'd to what is unusual, perhaps virtue will be found to be the most unnatural"(ib.). In a third meaning of the word 'nature' "both vice and virtue are equally artificial" (p. 527). The point is that all man's actions have to be conceived as necessarily running natural processes, various products of a few principles that dominate everything. The way Hume elucidates this, reminds the student of Spinoza's text of a famous passage of his *Political Treatise*.

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| We readily forget, that the designs, and projects, and views of men are principles as <i>necessary</i> in their operation as <i>heat and cold</i> , moist and dry: But taking them to be free and entirely our own, 'tis usual for us to set them in opposition to the other principles of nature (p. 526). | And to this end I have considered passions, such as love, hatred, anger, envy, ambition, pity, and the other perturbations of the mind, not as vices of human nature, but as properties, just as pertinent to it, as are <i>heat, cold</i> , storm, thunder and the like to the nature of the atmosphere, which phenomena, though inconvenient, are yet <i>necessary</i> , and have fixed causes, by means of which we endeavour to understand their nature, and the mind has just as much pleasure in viewing them aright, as in knowing such things as flatter the senses (TP ¼; p. 288). |
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The conventional or artificial character of common ethical values, opposed by the Greeks as 'nomos' to 'physis', will become the main theme of the second part of Hume's *'Of Morals'*.

32. Justice a human device but yet natural

Justice has to do with equality of citizens and giving to everybody his due, everything according to the decisions and under supervision of the government. The ancient and even also modern theory says that the political authority does not operate arbitrarily, but is in her

legal work steered by, or at least ought to be steered by, the right of nature, which would be knowable by everybody and is seen as being the same for all peoples in the world. Great advocates were in the seventeenth century Pufendorf and Grotius. Locke and Spinoza did not belong to this category. According to them justice is a product of gradual development in civilization, alternated with periods of stagnation, which don't have the same result for various peoples. Actual justice with its laws and institutions is anyhow always the outcome of agreement between the citizens, of *consensus* (Spinoza) / *consent* (Locke). What is Hume's position in the controversy?

In the question whether nature or human contrivance is the origin of systems of public law Hume undoubtedly sides Spinoza and Locke. "The sense of justice and injustice is not derived from nature, but arises artificially, tho' necessarily from education, and human conventions" (Tr. 3.2.1; p. 535). Our horizon is limited: we, individuals or society, search our own well being, not the general interest of all compatriots, let alone of all people in the world. "Public benevolence, therefore, or a regard to the interests of mankind, cannot be the original motive to justice" (ib. p. 534).

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| Experience sufficiently proves, that men, in the ordinary conduct of life, look not so far as the public interest ... In general, it may be affirmed, that there is no such passion in human minds, as the love of mankind, merely as such, independent of personal qualities, of services, or of relation to ourself. It is true, there is no human, and indeed no sensible, creature, whose happiness or misery does not, in some measure, affect us when brought near to us, and represented in lively colours: But this proceeds merely from sympathy, and is no proof of such an universal affection to mankind (ib. p. 533). | <p>Each one necessarily seeks or turns from, by the law of nature, what he judges to be good or bad [for himself] (E. 4/19; p. 156)).¹²⁹</p> <p>No one endeavours to preserve his being for the sake of anything else (E. 4/25; p. 158).</p> <p>The Hebrews were not bound by their religion to evince any pious care for other nations not included in the compact, but only for their own fellow-citizens (TTP 17 in fine; p. 236).¹³⁰</p> |
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Hume's remark that justice and injustice are not founded on nature, may not be misconceived in this sense, that he would be inclined to call them unnatural. As we saw earlier: whatever happens is natural. In this rejection of an opposition between natural and cultural he follows Spinoza too.

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| Though the rules of justice be artificial, they are not arbitrary. Nor is the expression improper to call them Laws of Nature; if by natural we understand what is common to an species, or even if we confine it to mean what is inseparable from the species (ib. | But that men must yield, or be compelled to yield, somewhat of their natural right, and that they bind themselves to live in a certain way, depends on human decree. Now, though I freely admit that all things are predetermined by universal natural laws to |
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¹²⁹ 'For himself' is added according to the previously given definitions of good and evil.

¹³⁰ This conclusion about the Jews was intended to be general: for the citizens of any country. The religious command of loving one's neighbours has according to Spinoza to be understood as meant only for 'concives'. See my "Spinoza's Concept of Christian Piety" in *NASS Monography # 9* (2000) p. 17-27.

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| 536). | exist and operate in a given, fixed, and definite manner, I still assert that the laws I have just mentioned depend on human decree (TTP 4/3-4; p. 57). |
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What people want with each other and the way of life they decide to or are forced to follow, are appearances of the general laws of nature working in them. All the rules of their society, therefore, are likewise rules of nature, expressions of the 'law of nature', however differing from the rules of other societies.

33. Hume's political theory in general

We had already often to discover that Hume borrows right and left from Spinoza, but nowhere is this so clearly and frequently the case as in his section 3..2..1 "Of the origin of justice and property". This section is also more than a culminating-point in Hume's paraphrasing Spinoza, for which he seems to have received divine assistance. Ten or fifteen places of his text show a direct connection with various expositions of Spinoza. I will do my utmost to bring them to light: they will be very helpful to understand better the greatness and originality of Spinoza.

That humans on themselves are weak and needy and for this reason refuge to living in a kind of community that compensates their individual indigence, is a universal and also very ancient theory, which one finds already in antiquity, e.g. in the treatises of Plato and Aristotle.¹³¹ But Hume is a master in formulating concisely and exhaustively the threefold advantage of living in a society.

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| It is by society alone he is able to supply his defects ... By society all his infirmities are compensated ... ¹³² Society provides a remedy for these three inconveniences. [A] By the conjunction of forces, our power is augmented. [B] By the partition of employments, our ability encreases. [C] And by <i>mutual succour</i> we are less exposed to fortune and accidents. It is by this additional <i>force, ability and security</i> , that society becomes advantageous (Tr. 3.2.2; p. 537). | [C] The formation of society serves not only for defensive purposes (<i>ad secure ab hostibus vivendum</i>) , but is also [B] very useful, and, indeed, absolutely necessary, as rendering possible the division of labour. If men did not render <i>mutual assistance</i> to each other, no one would have either the skill or the time to provide for his own sustenance and preservation (TTP 5; p. 73).[A] If two come together and unite their strength, they have jointly more <i>power</i> , and consequently more right over nature than both of them separately, and the more there are that have so joined in alliance, the more right they all collectively will posses (TP 2/13; p. 296). |
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From childhood up we experience the advantages of living together in the small circle of the family. Spinoza emphasized heavily the overall influence of custom and education.

¹³¹ Cf. the chapters 4 and 8 in Klever, *Archeologie van de economie. De economische theorie van de Griekse oudheid* (Nijmegen 1987²¹).

¹³² This sentence may be considered being inspired by Spinoza's : "*Societas ad multorum rerum compendium faciendum perutilis est*". In Hume's 'compensation' resounds Spinoza 'compendium'.

“According as each has been educated, so he repents of or glories in his actions”. But Hume is much more specific, just as Spinoza’s philosophical master and hero Franciscus van den Enden. Therefore this time I shall put a fragment of his natural history of man’s social inclination next to Hume’s. Both also see the mutual attraction of the sexes as a step in the direction of the political socialization.

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| <p>There is conjoined to those necessities, whose remedies are remote and obscure, another necessity... This necessity is no other than that natural <i>appetite betwixt the sexes</i>, which unites them together.... <i>Custom and habit operating on the tender minds of the children</i>, makes them sensible of the advantages which they may reap from society, as well as fashions them by degrees for it, by rubbing off those rough corners and untoward affections, which prevent their coalition (ib. p. 538). For when men, from their early education in society, have become sensible of the infinite advantages that result from it and have besides acquired a new affection to company... (ib. p. 541).</p> | <p>By nature, then, all people (consisting of male and female sex) are born free and to nobody earlier or closer obliged than to seek their own well-being above that of all other men and in case they would know to obtain this earlier and better on themselves alone; so were that a reason that man together with all other shy animals would try to avoid and shun all narrow sociability and companionship with other people. But considered that every man committed to himself is found to be very weak and powerless, even unable to supply his sober wants, and finds himself moreover also <i>affected with the lust to procreation</i> and similar inclinations, so reveal themselves, both for man and woman, also as a consequence of their very <i>tender education and discipline as children</i>, so many urgent needs that they are fully necessitated to look out for mutual help of their fellow men.¹³³</p> |
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The starting point of our gradual political socialisation is what is usually called our state of nature. Both our philosophers prick this balloon. The state of nature is nothing but a philosophical construction, an expedient for our thinking. Of course there never has been a completely asocial and totally barbaric pre-political situation in our pre-history. There always must have been a rudimentary form of cooperation as we may see it in the animal society.

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| <p>....supposed state of nature, provided they allow it to be a mere philosophical fiction, which never had, and never could have any reality... This state of nature, therefore, is to be regarded as a mere <i>fiction</i> not unlike that of the golden age, which poets have invented... (ib. p. 544-545). The state of nature, or that <i>imaginary</i> state (p. 552).</p> | <p>They have never conceived a theory of politics, which could be turned to use, but such as might be taken for a <i>chimaera</i>, or might have been formed in Utopia, or in that golden age of the poets, when, to be sure, there was least need of it (TP 1/1). The state of nature... a non-entity, existing in opinion rather than fact (TP2/15; 296).</p> |
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¹³³ See F. van den Enden, *Vrye Politieke Stellingen*. Ed. by Wim Klever (Amsterdam 1992) p. 138.

Not only is a pre-political state of nature a fiction, it is likewise a fiction to conceive political cooperation as totally free from practices of the fictitious jungle. "With regard to political theory, the difference between Hobbes and me self, which is the subject of your inquiry, consists in this, that I always preserve the natural right in its entirety, and I hold that the sovereign power in a State has right over a subject only in proportion to the excess of its power over that of a subject. This is always the case in a state of nature" (Ep. 50). The civil state does not stop the state of nature, but is in fact its continuation. Locke shared this Spinozistic theory.¹³⁴ Hume seems to be on this line too. Political organisation is the result of contrary movements of candidate participants and is always a question of gradual development and of more or less. There is never a sharp boundary between state of nature and civil state.

This becomes more than clear from Spinoza's and Hume's parallel explanation of the origin of the political state of a people. Political cooperation is not the effect of a kind of altruism or generosity, but precisely of our opposite and egoistic passions, of the drive of our natural powers, which are only orientated on our own well being. In the quite normal situation that our interests meet each other frontally, the anxiety for insecurity and the serious disadvantage of solitary vulnerability will certainly conquer the uninhibited promotion of our private interests and will push us in the direction of practical conventions with our fellow people.

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| <p>By a convention enter'd into by all the members of the society ... the passions are restrain'd in their partial and <i>contradictory motions</i>. Nor is such a restraint contrary to these passions; for if so, it cou'd never be enter'd into, nor maintain'd; but is only contrary to their heedless and impetuous movement. Instead of departing from our own interest, or from that of our nearest friends, by abstaining from the possessions of others, we cannot better consult both these interests, than by such a convention; because it is <i>by that means we maintain society</i>, which is so necessary to their well-being and subsistence, as well as to our own. This convention is not of the nature of a promise (Tr. 3.2.2; p. 541).</p> | <p>The manner in which this can come about, namely that men, who are necessarily liable to emotions and inconstant and variable, can make themselves mutually confident and have trust one in the other, is clear from 4/7 and 3/39, namely, that no emotion can be checked save by another emotion stronger than and <i>contrary</i> to the emotion to be checked, and that every one refrains from inflicting injury through <i>fear</i> of incurring a greater injury. <i>By this law a society (societas) can beheld together (firmari potest)</i> , provided it keep for itself the right every one has of avenging wrong done to him, and judging what is good and bad, and if it have also the power of prescribing a common way of life (4/37s2; p. 168).</p> |
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The two quotations aim at the same point. A state is not the effect of a rational decision, which eventually, after ample deliberation, would be expressed in a formal contract. No, a political society is the result of contrary motions in the passions of people, in which the fright for evil consequences of extreme individualism leads them quasi-mechanically to a communitarian feeling, given also the fact that they have experienced in their youth of its advantages. This sense of society will make us bow for conventions, by which we

¹³⁴ See my *John Locke*, o.c. p. 83.

accommodate our interests mutually. The way towards a political society is a gradual process along positive and negative experiences, trial and error. Unexpected circumstances and possibilities occasion new forms and new rules. The '*agreement betwixt us ... arises gradually and acquires force by a slow progression, and by our repeated experience of the inconveniences of transgressing it*' (p. 542).

Hume's political theory is thoroughly Spinozistic and Lockean and continues their founding it on the consent of the people. "In the civil state ... is decreed by common consent (*communi consensus*) what is good or bad" (4/37s2; p. 168). And according to Locke the commonwealth needs laws "received and allowed by *common consent* to be the standard of right and wrong".¹³⁵ This is a revolutionary breach of modern philosophy with the recent past, in which political right was based on natural right discoverable by reason (Grotius), divine right discoverable by revelation (Filmer) or promises of an utopian, while fully rational, man (Hobbes). Common or political right is the outcome of power and interest conflicts in the people, instead of being a deduction of rationally discoverable universal laws. Hume follows Spinoza's naturalistic and relativistic position: "The sense of justice is not founded on reason, or on the discovery of certain connexions and relations of ideas, which are eternal, immutable and universally obligatory" (p. 547).

34. How property is determined

One of the most important implications of this new and rather revolutionary political theory, as compared with its forerunners, is that the ownership of whatever is dependent on political authority. Natural rights are imaginative, not real. Possession of land, life facilities or goods has, in fact, to be conceived as a concession and protection by the state.

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| Our property is nothing but those goods, whose constant <i>possession is establish'd by the laws of society</i> .(...) 'Tis impossible there can be naturally any such thing as a fix'd right of property, while the opposite passions of men impel them in contrary directions and are not restrain'd by any convention or agreement (542-543). (The <i>society</i>) <i>assigns to each his particular portion</i> (554). | In the state of nature no one is master of anything by common consent, nor can there be anything in nature which can be said to belong to this man and not to that, but all things belong to all men; and accordingly in a natural state no will to render to each man his own can be conceived, nor to take away from a man what belongs to him, that is, in a state of nature nothing takes place that can be called just or unjust, but only in a civil state, where it is <i>decided by common consent what belongs to this man or that</i> (2/37s2; p. 168). |
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In a political community there are mainly two reasons why a good regulation of possessive relations is of primary importance. First while human striving after riches is insatiable¹³⁶ and second, while extreme wealth of a minority facing indigence and poverty of the people leads to tension and to an overpowering of the latter by the first. The care for destitute citizens is the exclusive responsibility and urgent survival strategy of any political authority. The well

¹³⁵ *Second Treatis of Government* 124.

¹³⁶ This point was regularly quite heailly emphasized by Spinoza's master Van den Enden in his ascription to human nature of an 'essentially undetermined desire'. See my translation into modern Dutch of his *Vrye Politiycke Stellingen* in *Directe Democratie* (Vrijstad 2007), section 17, p. 38.

being and safety of the people is according to both philosophers, Spinoza and Hume, the highest law.

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| <p>This avidity alone, of acquiring goods and possessions for ourselves and our nearest friends, is <i>insatiable</i>, perpetual, universal, <i>and directly destructive of society</i>. There is scarce is any one, who is not actuated by it. And there is no one, who has not reason to fear from it, when it acts without any restraint (Tr. 543).</p> <p>When a man of merit, of a beneficent disposition, restores a great fortune to a miser, or a seditious bigot, he has acted justly and laudably, but the public is a real sufferer (Tr. 248). In all determinations of morality, the <i>circumstance of public utility is ever principally in view</i> (EPM 143). All questions of property are subordinate to the authority of civil laws, which extend, restrain, modify, and alter the rules of natural justice (EPM 158).</p> | <p>I will then indicate the restless and pitiable condition of those who are greedy for money and covet honours, and finally, prove by clear reasoning and abundant examples that through <i>insatiable</i> desire for honours and greed for riches <i>commonwealths must necessarily perish</i> and have perished (Ep.44; p. 244). Avarice, by which most men are very much led (TP 7/17; p. 335). Avarice is the <i>immoderate</i> desire and love of riches (E. 3/df47; p. 138).</p> <p>The care of the poor is incumbent on society as a whole, and <i>looks to the general advantage only</i> (E. 4/cp.17; p. 193). No one, save by the authority or concession of the sovereign ... has the right of providing for the poor (TTP 19; p. 252).¹³⁷</p> <p><i>Populi salus summa lex</i> (Well-being of the people is the highest law, TP 7/5) .</p> |
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That the final say about possessions or profits of citizens belongs to the government, has its reason in the human incapability to bridle one's greed on the one hand and the threat of a destructive crisis of the political economy on the other hand, when nothing is done. Admonitions by preachers or governors at the address of the citizens to moderate their concupiscence don't have any effect.

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| <p>It is certain, that no affection of the human mind has both a sufficient force, and a proper direction to counterbalance the love of gain, and render men fit members of society, by making them abstain from the possessions of others (p. 543). Even every individual person must find himself a gainer, on balancing the account (p. 549).</p> | <p>Everyone is drawn away by his pleasure, while avarice, ambition, envy, hatred, and the like so engross the mind that reason has no place therein (TTP 16; p. 204). But whatever man is ordered by the general consent, he is bound to execute, or may rightfully be compelled thereto (TP 2/17; p. 297).</p> |
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The quotes put side by side are often taken from different contexts and therefore not parallel in all respects. They could easily be extended or replaced by other variants .

¹³⁷ See also another sentence in this chapter: "So we are also bound not to help one man at another's loss, still less at a loss to the whole state. No private citizen can know what is good for the state, except he learn it through the sovereign power, who alone has the right to transact public business" (p. 250). Spinoza implicitly refers to Livius' story about the rebellious action of a Spurius Manlius who had laid in a private supply of corn and, when the city of Rome was suffering from famine and the public resources had come to an end, took it into his head to dole it out to the plebs for acquiring gratitude and influence.

Nevertheless the ideas they express are the same. Hume's chapter "*Of the origin of justice and property*" is the purest kind of Spinozism. That it is not a 'regard to public interest' (547), which moves us to constitute and follow the rules of justice, is stressed by Hume in a separate 'proposition'.¹³⁸ It is simply from "a concern for our own" that public justice arises (ib.).

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| Thus self-interest is the original motive to the establishment of justice ((551). | As each man seeks that most which is useful to him, so men are most useful one to the other (E. 4/35c2; p. 164). |
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Our coming together in a political society and making coercive laws is deeply rooted in our original egoism, in our drive to survive amicably or forcibly. In the end the society with our sense of justice and our willingness to obedience is literally the effect of impressions, of the way we emotionally react to what happens to our body.

In a second 'proposition' (yes, again this typical Spinozistic word) Hume claims, in full agreement with Spinoza, "that those impressions, which give rise to this sense of justice, are not natural to the mind of man, but arise from artifice and human conventions ... For any considerable alteration of temper and circumstances destroys equally justice and injustice" (p. 548). Both see the overwhelming influence of custom and education on the pattern of our socialization, next to the always varying corporeal mixture of individuals. Human history can result to fundamental turnabouts, not only regarding political systems but also concerning the power relation between man and woman.¹³⁹

35. Invalidity of unnatural or extorted promises

According to Hobbes it is a contract that seals the birth of a state, a contract in which future subjects promise to obey a candidate prince and he, on his turn, promises to protect them and to care for their well-being. Together with his three naturalistic predecessors (Spinoza, Locke, Mandeville) Hume turns against this explanatory model and considers it as a misconception, which cannot boast of historical experience. Never did or does a state originate from argumentation and rational deliberation, but always out of a passionate promotion of a group's interest or – in case of a revolution – from heavy indignation about serious injury. State building is not the work of intellectuals nor of ordinary people in so far they are cerebrally active, but the result of reactive violence. As our moral distinctions are not conclusions from our reasoning but arise automatically out of our experience of favourable or unfavourable impacts, so also the form of our political cooperation. If there reigns anywhere justice and political cohesion, they are effects of the mechanisms of our individual or collective emotional activism.

In his section 3.2..5 (*Of the obligation of promises*) Hume intends again to *prove* in 'two propositions', that the rule of morality, which enjoins the performance of promises, is not natural. What he is going to do, is methodically fully comparable with Spinoza's way of demonstrating his propositions, namely by deducing them from (or reducing them to) more

¹³⁸ Mind that Hume makes use here of Spinoza's pregnant term for a theoretical claim. None of Hume's philosophical sources showed this remarkable key-term always in his references to the essentials of his argument as Spinoza did.

¹³⁹ See Spinoza's last written text (TP 11/4; p. 387), in which he does not exclude a drastic change in the relation between the sexes.

fundamental or earlier proved items; in this case man's selfishness (p. 571), his being driven by his passions (p. 573), his being in the hand of the strongest power (577).

In the fictitious, a-historical and pre-political state of nature, in which everybody fights for his life with all possible means and is only led by his power, desire and slyness, keeping of promises naturally cannot be a useful strategy for one's survival.

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| <p>[Proposition S5A] that a promise would not be intelligible before human conventions had established it, and [prop.S5B] that even if it were intelligible, it would not be attended with any moral obligation (568). It is certain we can naturally no more change our own sentiments than the motions of the heavens(p. 569). No action can be required of us as our duty, unless there be implanted in human nature some actuating passion or motive, capable of producing the action (570).</p> | <p>Whatever, therefore, an individual (considered as under the sway of nature) thinks useful for himself, whether led by sound reason or <i>impelled by the passions</i>, that he has a sovereign right to seek and to take for himself as he best can, whether by force, cunning (<i>dolo</i>), entreaty or any other means (TTP 16; p. 202). Generally nothing is forbidden by the law of nature, except what is beyond everyone's power (TP 2/18; p. 297).</p> |
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Moral obligations are inconceivable, or better completely silly and contraproductive, in the imaginative state of nature. Our behaviour is irresistibly actuated towards our own profit and pleasure. Hume and Spinoza demonstrate their propositions on the same foundation.

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| <p>Men are naturally selfish, or endowed only with a confined generosity, they are not easily induced to perform any action for the interest of strangers, except with a view to some reciprocal advantage, which they had no hope of obtaining but by such a performance (p. 571).</p> | <p>Each one necessarily seeks or turns from, by the laws of his nature, what he judges to be good or bad (E. 4/19; p. 156). No one endeavours to preserve his being for the sake of anything else (4/25). Every man defends another's cause, so far as he thinks thereby to establish his own (TP 7/8; p. 331).</p> |
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Nobody, even not politicians, can change these natural properties. Modern Spinoza scholars could never give a better commentary on Spinoza's radically naturalistic position than the disguised eighteenth century Spinoza scholar with the name of David Hume in his fascinating style:

All this is the effect of the natural and inherent principles and passions of human nature; and as these passions and principles are inalterable, it may be thought, that our conduct, which depends on them, must be so too, and that 'twould be in vain, either for moralists or politicians, to temper with us, or attempt to change the usual course of our actions, with a view to public interest. And indeed, did the success of their designs depend upon their success in correcting the selfishness and ingratitude of men, they would never make any progress, unless aided by omnipotence, which is alone able to new-mould the human mind, and change its character in such fundamental articles. All they can pretend to is, to give a new direction to those natural passions, and teach us, that we can better satisfy our

appetites in an oblique and artificial manner, than by their headlong and impetuous motion (p. 573).¹⁴⁰

Returning to the subject of this section we can affirm with Hume (and Spinoza would not object to it) that a promise may be defined as the expression of an unambivalent and resolute direction of our mind towards a performance (574). That we should freely will the promised thing, has to be seen as an illusion.

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| We have prov'd already, that there is no such (free) act of the mind (575). | Men are mistaken in thinking themselves free (2/35s; p. 65). |
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Hume adds to his declaration, that “consequently promises impose no natural obligation”. As we saw earlier, moral values don’t derive from a natural situation of affairs. Obligations derive their character of a prescribed rule from social and political regulations. It is on account of a political convention that we have to stand by a given word or a signed contract. But the distance between the civil and the natural situation is not very great. Anticipating our next section on this subject we put here next to each other two significant quotations, in which exceptions on the rule are discussed and illustrated by the same example. More than the content it is this exemplification which might convince us that Hume draws inspiration from Spinoza’s text.

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| We may draw the same conclusion, concerning the origin of promises, from the force, which is supposed to invalidate all contracts, and to free us from their obligation. Such a principle is a proof, that promises have no natural obligation, and are mere artificial contrivances for the convenience and advantage of society. If we consider aright of the matter, force is not essentially different from any other motive of hope or fear, which may induce us to engage our word, and lay ourselves under any obligation. A man, dangerously wounded, who promises a competent sum to a surgeon to cure him, would certainly be bound to performance; though the case be not so much different from that of one, <i>who promises a sum to a robbher</i> , as to produce so great a difference in our sentiments of morality, if these sentiments were not <i>built entirely on public interest and convenience</i> (p. 377) | As a necessary consequence of the principle just enunciated, no one can sincerely (<i>absque dolo</i>) promise to forego the right which he has over all things, and in general no one will abide by his promises, unless under the fear of a greater evil, or the hope of a greater good. An example will make the matter clearer. <i>Suppose that a robber forces me to promise</i> that I will give him my goods at his will and pleasure. It is plain (inasmuch as my natural right is, as I have shown, co-extensive with my power) that if I can free myself from this robber by stratagem, by assenting to his demands, I have the natural right to do so, and to pretend to accept his conditions (<i>dolo pacisci</i>)... We may therefore conclude that a compact (<i>pactum</i>) is only made valid by its utility, without which it becomes null and void T(TP 16; p. 203-4). |
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Hume perfectly equals Spinoza pragmatism and realism.

¹⁴⁰ Hume intentionally avoids the personalisation of the almighty nature.

36. *Difference between natural and civil state more apparent than real*

As regards Spinoza there can be no discussion on this point. Just as a pre-political form of society has to be rejected, so also a post-natural form of politics. Political cohabitation and cooperation is essentially a more or less civilized continuation of the pre-historic jungle. We are optically deceived because we see no blood in our juridical systems, whereas we suppose there was much open bloodshed in the archaic situation. But it is nonetheless true that the political relation between government and subjects and also between various political parties before and after they work together in a coalition has to be conceived as a vertical c.q. horizontal relation between centres of power. Spinoza represented a caesura in the history of political thinking when writing to his friend Jelles: "Concerning political theory, the difference between Hobbes and myself, which is the subject of your inquiry, consists in this, that I always preserve the natural right in its entirety, and I hold that the sovereign power in a state has right over a subject only in proportion to the excess of its power over that of a subject. This is always the case in a state of nature" (Ep.50; p. 258).

Hume unconditionally adopted this view and elaborated it in his own characteristic way, but always fully in line with Spinoza's impulses. Any society is the outcome of physical processes. "Virtues and vices are (...) unintelligible, unless we have motives, independent of the morality, to impel us to just actions, and deter us from unjust ones" (Tr. 3.2.6; p. 585).

Depending on various circumstances various kinds of social behaviour arise. Even the *consent* itself, which makes us live together in peace or in stress and opposition, is a mechanical effect of the impacts/impressions on our bodies. Hume deals with this subject in 3.2.7 (*Of the origin of government*) and has the advantage that he can largely profit from the political theory of John Locke, who on his turn heavily leaned on Spinoza's shoulders.¹⁴¹ The conduct of citizens is founded on their assessments of advantage versus disadvantage in the far or near future. They know that transgressions of the law are punished. The prospect on penal repercussions coerce citizens to the renewal of their fundamental consent... or not. But how is it with the magistrates themselves? How are they deterred from corruption and forced to keep to the law themselves? Is there no escape possible for choosing unpunished private advantage above equality for the law? Which '*expedient*' is effective to withhold them from professional injustice? It is here that we see Hume taking refuge to the so called '*coupling principle*' of the Dutch Enlightenment of Van den Enden, De la Court and Spinoza, which is an essential condition for any sound and stable political system. This principle implies that a governor can only benefit and favour himself (what he always wants to do) by serving the general interest. Political organisation has not to be aimed at the exclusion of his advantages, but in this way, that his unavoidable stake for own profit functions as a lever for general benefit.

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| (This expedient) being impracticable with respect to all mankind, it can only take place with respect to a few, whom we thus immediately interest in the execution of justice. There are the | And therefore it is likewise not possible that any human can be forced to the pursuit of any common best by something else than only this: to arrive by this better to his particular well-being, | If human nature was in such disposition, that men most desired what is most useful, no contrivance (<i>ars</i>) would be needed to produce unity and confidence. But, as it is admittedly far otherwise |
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¹⁴¹ See my *John Locke*, o.c. sections 44-49.

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| <p>persons, whom we call civil magistrates ... Here then is the origin of civil government and society. Men are not able radically to cure, either in themselves or others, that narrowness of soul, which makes them prefer the present to the remote. They cannot change their natures. All they can do is to change their situation, and <i>render the observance of justice the immediate interest of some particular persons</i> and its violation their more remote. These persons, then, are not only induced to observe those rules in their own conduct, but also to constrain others to a like regularity (Tr. 3.2.7; p. 589).</p> | <p>profit and best. And therefore I consider it to be one of the most valuable observations concerning the best of a people, that all things among that same people are organized in such a way, that every member or man of it will most difficultly be able or know to acquire any particular or private profit to the disadvantage of the common. So that everybody's particular and first-rate well-being will not only never weaken or hurt the common best; but the Enjoyer is by this always the more necessitated to promote and reinforce the common best more and more to the well-being and the good pleasure of everybody (Van den Enden, VPS, p. 54).¹⁴²</p> | <p>with human nature, a dominion must of necessity be so ordered, that all, governing and governed alike, whether they will or no, shall do what makes for the general welfare (TP 6/3; p. 316). The best government is there, where welfare and evil fare of governors is coupled to the welfare and evilfare of the subjects (John de la Court, <i>Consideratien van Staat</i>, 1661, referred to by Spinoza).</p> |
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The coupling principle naturally has to be implemented in concrete laws and institutions. Spinoza devised to this end various legal tricks in his architectural *Tractatus politicus*; Hume did not venture upon such a task. He never saw it as his calling to invent a new political system or to renovate the current system drastically. But he nonetheless more than once heavily stressed the great relevance of an *institutional* coupling of the magistrate's personal interest to the service of the common good. Hereafter I will give two quotes from his *Essays* next to three fragments from the *Political Treatise*. The comparison will make it a probable hypothesis that he refers implicitly to Spinoza when seeking shelter with 'political writers'.

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| <p>But a republican and free government would be an obvious absurdity, if the particular checks and controuls, provided by the constitution, had really no influence, and made it not the interest, even of bad men, to act for the public good. Such is the intention of these forms of government, and such is their real effect, where they are wisely constituted.... So great is the force of laws, and of particular forms of government,</p> | <p>But as human nature is so constituted, that everyone seeks with the utmost passion his own advantage, and judges those laws to be most equitable, which he thinks necessary to preserve and increase his substance, and defends another's cause so far only as he thinks he is thereby establishing his own; it follows hence, that the counsellors chosen must be such, that their private affairs and their own interests depend on the general</p> |
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¹⁴² Quoted from my English translation: Franciscus van den Enden, *Free political propositions and considerations of state*, 1665 (Vrijstad 2007) p. 157.

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| <p>and so little dependence have they on the humours and tempers of men that ...(Essays 3, p. 16).</p> <p><i>Political writers</i> have established it as a maxim, that, in contriving any system of government, and fixing the several checks and controuls of the constitution, every man ought to be supposed a <i>knave</i>, and to have no other end, in all his actions, than private interest. By this interest we must govern him, and by means of it, make him, notwithstanding his insatiable avarice and ambition, co-operate to public good. Without this, say they, we shall in vain boast of the advantages of any constitution, and shall find, in the end, that we have no security for our liberties or possessions, except the good-will of our rulers; that is, we shall have no security at all (Essays 6, p. 42).</p> | <p>welfare and peace of all (TP 7/4; p. 329). The syndics and other ministers of state are to have no salary, but such emoluments, that they cannot maladminister affairs of state without great loss to themselves... Since, no man defends another's cause, save in so far as he thereby hopes to establish his own interest, things must, of necessity, be so ordered that the ministers, who have charge of affairs of state, should most pursue their own interest, when they are most watchful for the general good (TP 8/24; p. 355).</p> <p>A dominion, then, whose well-being depends on any man's good faith, and whose affairs cannot be properly administered, unless those who are engaged in them will act honestly, will be very unstable. On the contrary, to insure its permanence, its public affairs should be so ordered, that those who administer them, whether guided by reason or passion, cannot be led to act treacherously or basely. Nor does it matter to the security of a dominion, in what spirit men are led to rightly administer its affairs, provided things are rightly administrated (TP 1/6; p. 289-290).¹⁴³</p> |
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The convergence of the quotes in more than one respect is, so I think, absolutely convincing for my thesis that Hume follows Spinoza's pioneering in radical political theory. But there is much more evidence for this claim.

37. *The limits of our loyalty*

Political cooperation, therefore, is the safest and most profitable form of our self-defence. Without this we would only succeed in acquiring eventually a weak and risky kind of survival, if any. But does this mean that through participating by consent in a political structure give up the control about ourselves and our life entirely? Not at all. We don't work together in a political system without restriction and unconditionally. Spinoza was clear about our reserves, Hume not less in section 3.2.9 (*Of the measures of allegiance*).

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| But when instead of protection and security, they meet with tyranny and oppression, they are free'd from their promises, (as happens in all conditional contracts) and | No one can ever so utterly transfer to another his power and, consequently, his rights, as to cease to be a man; nor can there ever be a power so sovereign that it |
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¹⁴³ I added to Elwes' translation 'provided that things are rightly administrated' for Spinoza's 'modo res recte administrentur', which four words were left untranslated by Elwes.

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| <p>return to that state of liberty, which preceded the institution of government. Men wou'd never be so foolish as to enter into such engagements as shou'd turn entirely to the advantage of others, without any view of bettering their own condition (Tr. 3.2.9; p. 601).</p> | <p>can carry out every possible wish. It will always be vain to order a subject to hate what he believes brings him advantage, or to love what brings him loss, or not to be offended at insults, or not to wish to be free from fear, or a hundred other things of the sort, which necessarily follow from the laws of human nature. .. We must, therefore, grant that every man retains some part of his right, in dependence on his own decision and no one else's (TTP 17; p. 214).</p> |
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Hume adds to the quote above that magistrates who propose to draw profit from the submission of the citizens, must engage themselves expressly or tacitly, to make them reap some advantage from their authority. Without 'performances' on their side the obedience on the other side will quickly come to an end. Spinoza, on his turn, explains in the sequence of 'his' quote above, that those magistrates will enjoy the highest authority, who rule about the souls of their subjects and make them obey willingly as an effect of their feeling the justice done in behalf of the common good. Both our philosophers emphasize unisono that only the experience of personal advance and the acquirement of well-being is the foundation of stability and continuity of a government.

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| <p>As the interest, therefore, is the immediate sanction of government, the one can have no longer being than the other; and whenever the civil magistrate carries his oppression so far as to render his authority perfectly intolerable, we are no longer bound to submit to it. The cause ceases; the effect must cease also (in. p. 602).</p> | <p>But besides these characteristics there was one feature peculiar to this state of Israel and of great importance in retaining the affections of the citizens, and checking all thoughts of desertion, or abandonment of the country: namely, self-interest (<i>ratio utilitatis</i>), the strength and life of all human action. This was peculiarly engaged in the Hhebrew state, for nowhere else did citizens possess their goods so securely as did the subjects of this community (TTP 17; p. 230).</p> |
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The agreement is again striking. According to both philosophers self interest is the origin of the naturalness and logical effect of rebellion in the case that political authorities seriously misuse their task and exploit their subjects to their own behalf.

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| <p>No nation, that cou'd find any remedy, ever yet suffer'd the cruel ravages of a tyrant, or were blam'd for their resistance. Those who took up arms against Dionysius or Nero, or Philip the Second, have the favour of every reader in the perusal of their history; and nothing but the most violent perversion of common sense can ever lead us to condemn them. 'Tis certain,</p> | <p>The commonwealth, then, to maintain its independence, is bound to preserve the causes of fear and reverence, otherwise it ceases to be a commonwealth. For the person or persons that hold dominion, can no more combine with keeping up of majesty the running with harlots drunk or naked about the streets, or the performances of a stage-player, or the</p> |
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| therefore, that in all our notions of morals we never entertain such an absurdity as that of passive obedience, but make allowances for resistance in the more flagrant instances of tyranny and oppression. (ib. p. 603). | open violation or contempt of laws passed by themselves, than they can combine existence with non-existence. But to proceed to slay and rob subjects, ravish maidens, and the like, turns fear into indignation and the civil state into a state of enmity (TP 4/4; p. 311). |
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That Hume well meditated precisely this Spinozistic passage may be concluded from the fact that he fills in the historical figures, which exemplify the kind of governmental misconduct Spinoza describes. It would be difficult to find for instance an emperor stage player or an emperor dancing with harlots drunk about the street, apart from Nero! And his example of the Dutch rebellion against Philip the Second was, indeed, not treated in this passage but certainly present in Spinoza's text. "As for the United States of the Netherlands, they have never, as we know, had a king, but only counts, who never attained the full rights of dominion. The States evidently acted as principals in the *Induction* at the time of the Earl of Leicester's mission: they always reserved for themselves the authority to keep the counts up to their duties, and the power to preserve this authority and the liberty of the citizens. They had ample means of vindicating their rights if their rulers should prove tyrannical" (TTP 18; p. 244).

However, lynching a despot is according to both philosophers an extreme measure, which seldom has positive effects for the political community.

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| The English people furnish us with a terrible example of this fact. They sought how to depose their monarch under the forms of law, but when he had been removed, they were utterly unable to change the form of government, and after much bloodshed only brought it about that a new monarch should be hailed under a different name (as though it had been a question of names). This new monarch could only consolidate his power by completely destroying the royal stock, putting to death the king's friends, real or supposed, and disturbing with war the peace which might encourage discontent ... (TTP 18; p. 243). | Tyrannicide, or the assassination of usurpers and oppressive princes, was highly extolled in ancient times, because it both freed mankind from many of these monsters, and seemed to keep the others in awe whom the sword or poniard could not reach. But history and experience having since convinced us, that this practice increases jealousy and cruelty of princes, a Timoleon and a Brutus. though treated with indulgence on account of the prejudices of their times, are now considered as very improper models for imitation (EPM 143; p. 180-181). |
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The full context of both these passages ought to be given here, what is practically impossible. The reader has to consult it himself, in order to become persuaded that Hume's and Spinoza's arguments are not only parallel but fully identical.

38. The right of the strongest

Rebellion brings civil war and the anarchy of our situation before our peaceful political cooperation. Spinoza taught us that we actually never left this situation behind us when participating in whatever body politic. The relation between government and subjects is

equally and as much a power relation as the relation between people in the state of nature and as the relation between independent states. A sovereign only keeps his authority by taking effective and just decisions, but also by punishing transgression of the law and imposing in this way fear. This is already a small part of enmity in the political order. And when political authority is considerably weakened by remissness, contrary powers or parties have a chance to come up and occupy the vacuum. At first it will be an exploring of possibilities for a change and a renewal. How far will the unlawful opposition be tolerated? Spinoza and Hume agree in this point, that the power of a state appears in (but not consists in) the maintaining of zero-tolerance.

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| <p>As numerous and civilized societies cannot subsist without government, so government is entirely useless without <i>exact obedience</i> (Tr. 3..2.10; p. 605).</p> | <p>So, too, when Christ says: "But if a man strike you on the right cheek, turn to him the left also": The very doctrine inculcated here by Christ just before the destruction of the city was also taught by Jeremiah before the first destruction of Jerusalem, that is, in similar circumstances, as we see from Lam. iii.25-30. These words of Christ and Jeremia about tolerating injury (<i>de toleranda iniuria</i>) were spoken in a corrupt commonwealth; they were only valid in places where justice is neglected, and in a time of oppression, but do not hold in a well-ordered state (TTP 7; p. 105).¹⁴⁴</p> |
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The tension between the magistrate and the citizen, which is often the tension between opposite parties of the commonwealth, can best be described as a brute fight, the outcome of which determines what has to be instituted as law and will forthwith be defended as right. Hume does not hesitate to join Spinoza in his famous but also disreputable definition of right as might.

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| <p>The state of nature (was) a state of mutual war and violence...No law was heard of; no rule of justice known: no distinction of property regarded: Power was the only measure of right (EPM 151), 'Twas by the sword, therefore, that every emperor acquired, as well as defended his right; and we must either say, that all the known world, for so many ages, had no government, and ow'd no allegiance to any one, or must allow, that the <i>right of the stronger</i>, in public affairs, <i>is to be receiv'd as legitimate, and authoriz'd by morality</i>, when not oppos'd by any other title (Tr. 3.2.10; p.</p> | <p>The natural right of the individual man is thus determined, not by sound reason, but by desire and power (TTP 16; p. 201). It is clear that the right of the supreme authorities is nothing else than simple natural right, limited, indeed, by the power, not of every individual, but of the multitude, which is guided, as it were, by one mind. That is, as each individual in the state of nature, so the body and mind of a dominion have as much right as they have power. And thus each single citizen or subject has the less right, the more the commonwealth exceeds him in power (TP 3/2). This right,</p> |
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¹⁴⁴ According to Spinoza the philosopher Christ does not teach charity on a world scale, but keeps to the Jewish law: 'Love your neighbour (= compatriot) and hate your enemy'.

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| 609). | which is determined by the power of a multitude...(TP 2/17; p. 297). And as every one's right is defined by his virtue or power...(E. 4/37s1; p. 167). |
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Hume digresses on the various titles to which a government may appeal for the acquirement of loyalty, dedication and obedience of the citizens. Among them are the fame and honour of a conqueror, long possession of the crown by succession or the putative institution by God or one of his prophets. "But when these titles are mingled and oppos'd in different degrees, they often occasion perplexity; and are less capable of solution from the arguments of lawyers and philosophers, than from the swords of the soldiery" (ib. p. 613). He seems to let us surmise that this is a natural and unavoidable process. "It is certain, that the people still retain the right of resistance since 'tis impossible, even in the most despotic governments, to deprive them of it" (ib. p. 614). Time and custom grant some authority to forms of government, but not at the price of anything. And again is there the laudatory reference to the successful rebellion of the Seven Provinces: "the establish'd liberty of the Dutch is no inconsiderable *apology* for their obstinate resistance to Philip the second" (ib. P 617). Rebellion is legitimized if successful.¹⁴⁵

In one of his finest essays, the essay *Of the original contract*, Hume asks his readers not to idealize the 'consent', which is, indeed, the best foundation of any political system. In a sense this essay, which heavily leans upon Locke's political philosophy, may be considered a kind of demystification of the supposedly peaceful character of the *consensus*. "My intention here is not to exclude the consent of the people from being one just foundation of government where it has place. It is surely the best and most sacred of any, I only pretend, that it has very seldom had place in any degree, and never almost in its full extent" (p. 474). No authority is possible without some consent, but in most cases violence is not only the origin of political authority, but also of its continuation and maintenance. Wherever exists the so called free choice or assent, it appears only to be partial and conditional and exists always under the threat of Damocles's sword. When distress and oppression become unbearable, the first opportunity will be taken for the exercise of one's 'right of resistance' (ib. p. 4769). Hume lards his essay with a great number of examples from the ancient and contemporary history and finally refuges for a confirmation to the judgment of the Count of Boulainvilliers, "who ridicules the notion of an original contract". According to this Spinozistic historian only time confers right and authority to what is originally based on power and violence.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ See Alexandre Matheron, "Spinoza et le pouvoir" in his *Anthropologie e Politique au XVIIe siècle (Etudes sur Spinoza)* (Paris: Vrin 1986) pp. 103-123.

¹⁴⁶ Hume's reference is more specifically to Boulainvilliers (1658-1722), *Etat de France*, 3 vols (Londres 1727). Boulainvillier (as his name ought to be written) has great merits for the spread of Spinozism in France by means of his widely read manuscript *Essay de métaphysique dans les principes de Benoit de Spinoza* (of which many copies are conserved), which was posthumously, in 1731, published as a pseudo-refutation of Spinoza under the misleading title *Réfutation de Spinoza*. See about him Paul Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution*, o.c. 306-322. : "L'emprise de Spinoza sur Boulainvillier est donc considérable... C'est un fait que Boulainvillier, tout autant et plus que Bayle, demeure le véritable introducteur du spinozisme en France; sa prétendue réfutation, répandue en manuscrits dès 1712, et imprimée en 1731, sera le bréviaire du spinozisme au XVIIIe siècle; elle dispensera bien souvent Voltaire et Diderot de recourir au text latin de Spinoza. Boulainvillier est le 'Spinoza français'". Hume had great respect for Boulainvillier. He calls him a 'noted

39. *International relations*

The rough character of politics in the view of our twins has also to be carried over to the relation between states. A federation or an international alliance is an exception; its collective superpower constitutes a new kind of right, the right of combined peoples, also called 'international law'. The normal situation is that states are each other's enemies, just like individuals before they started to found a society. Hume broaches this subject in *Treatise* section 3.2.11: *Of the laws of nations*. Hereafter I put again various fragments opposite each other, fragments which contain on both sides the same doctrine, albeit not in the same order.

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| <p>Political writers tell us, that in every kind of intercourse, a body politic is to be consider'd as one person; and indeed this assertion is so far just, that different nations, as well as private persons, require mutual assistance; at the same time that their selfishness and ambition are perpetual sources of war and discord. But tho' nations in this particular resemble individuals, yet as they are very different in other respects, no wonder they regulate themselves by different maxims, and give rise to a new set of rules, which we call the laws of nations ... The same <i>natural</i> obligation of interests [as between individuals] takes place among independent kingdoms, and gives rise to the same <i>morality</i>. ... Since the natural obligation to justice, among different states, is not so strong as among individuals, the moral obligation, which arises from it, must partake of its weakness; and we must necessarily give a greater indulgence to a prince or minister, who deceives another; than to a private gentleman, who breaks his word of honour. (p. 618-619). Human nature cannot by any means subsist, without the association of individuals ... But nations can subsist without intercourse... <i>The moral obligation holds proportion with the usefulness</i>. All politicians will allow and most philosophers, that reasons of state may, in</p> | <p>Two dominions stand towards each other in the same relation as do two men in the state of nature, with this exception, that a commonwealth can provide against being oppressed by another; which a man in the state of nature cannot do seeing that he is overcome daily by sleep, often by disease or mental infirmity, and in the end by old age, and is besides liable to other inconveniences, from which a commonwealth can secure itself (TP 3/11; p. 306). Two commonwealths are naturally enemies... Those who stand outside a commonwealth and retain their natural rights, continue enemies. If one commonwealth wishes to make war on another and employ extreme measures to make that other dependent on itself, it may lawfully make the attempt, since it needs but the bare will of the commonwealth for war to be waged. Peace is the right of at least two states, who thereby are confederated (TP 3/13) This pact remains so long unmoved as the motive for entering into it, that is, fear of hurt or hope of gain, subsists. But take away from either commonwealth this hope or fear, and it is left independent, and the link, whereby the commonwealths were mutually bound, breaks of itself . And therefore every commonwealth has <i>the right to break its</i></p> |
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republican' and 'a man of learning, and very conversant in history'". In his *National History of Religion* (section vi) Hume draws from another writing of Boulainviller, namely *Historie abrégé* (La Haye 1733, 3 vols), this time in order to deride together with him the corporeal resurrection of Christ. It is not improbable that in his French time, perhaps already earlier, Hume has found much Spinozistic inspiration in the works of this underground operating protagonist of modern times.

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| particular emergencies, dispense with the rules of justice, and invalidate any treaty or alliance (EPM 165). ¹⁴⁷ | <i>contract</i> , whenever it chooses, and cannot be said to act treacherously or perfidiously in breaking its word, as soon as the motive of hope or fear is removed (TP 3/14; p. 307). |
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Words are different, the content is the same. Hume finds himself fully on Spinoza's critical and unorthodox line as regards the 'law of nations'. The extraordinary congruence in this risky matter, found nowhere else, may be considered an argument, that Hume was dependent on Spinoza. Both thinkers undermine the absolute character of Grotius' foundational law of international relations: *pacta sunt servanda* (pacts have always to be kept). This was the view of the Stoa, of the scholastic Middle Ages, of the 'natural right' school in modern times, to which also Hobbes was debet. But our twins say: it depends. If a pact turns out to be noxious for the country, it becomes by that very fact invalid; the contracting state will no longer consider itself committed to it. Hume's judgment about a state breaking its pact seems to be less straight on an allowance: "we must necessarily give a greater indulgence to a prince or minister, who deceives another" (ib. p. 519). But this is a misleading impression. His argument that in contrast to individuals, who cannot always care for themselves, states are normally capable to permanently conserving their power and independence, does persuade us of his complete adherence to Spinoza's position. This argument is, indeed, a crypto-quotation. In his later work on morals and politics he brilliantly reformulates Spinoza's principle for agreements between individuals as well as states: "*Common interest and utility beget infallibly a standard of right and wrong among the parties concerned*" (EPM 171). No law of nations neither any human rights make things wrong or condemnable that are in the interest of particular states according to the perception of that state and of that state alone. Where a state does perceive a utility and is, moreover, desiring and able to attain it, other competitive parties and eventually injured states will, of course, try to withhold it from its undertakings by means of an appeal to an 'acknowledged' declaration of rights, but in vain when their power fails to enforce it.. International relations are, at bottom, nothing but the never surpassable state of natural hostility between states. Right is always a flexible and changeable norm, imposed by the superpower (which may be a federation of states). This is Hume's philosophy of right, undeniably in Spinoza's spur.

40. Political specification of 'good'

Hume had already given a scientific determination of morality in section 3.1.1: "*Moral distinctions derived from a moral sense*". This section was inspired, as we concluded, by *Ethica* 4/8: "The knowledge of good and bad is nothing else than the emotion of pleasure or pain, in so far as we are conscious of it" (p. 149). Towards the end of the whole book on morals, in section 3.3.1 (*Of the origin of natural virtues and vices*), Hume retakes the argument of Spinoza's proposition in a fascinating and purely Spinozistic paraphrase which might also be a useful help for starting *Ethica*-readers, because it is such a sharp recapitulation:

¹⁴⁷ Cf. this comparison of politicians with philosophers also to Spinoza's similar comparison in TP 1/2: "Yet there can be no doubt, that statesmen have written about politics far more happily than philosophers. For, as they had experience for their mistress, they taught nothing that was inconsistent with practice" (p. 288).

The chief spring or *actuating principle* of the human mind is *pleasure or pain*; and when these sensations are remov'd, both from our thought and feeling, we are, in a great measure, incapable of passion or action, of desire or volition. The most *immediate effects of pleasure and pain are the propense and averse motions* of the mind; which are diversified into volition, into desire and aversion, grief and joy, hope and fear, according as the pleasure or pain changes its situation, and becomes probable or improbable, certain or uncertain, or is consider'd out of our power for the present moment (p. 625).

Another important Spinozistic item that Hume here deals of for the second time, as it were to hammer it in the mind of his readers, is the theory that an extremely powerful cause of our behaviour is to be located in “the nature and force of *sympathy*” (p. 626). This was his version of the mechanism called by Spinoza ‘*affectuum imitatio*’.¹⁴⁸ In his enthusiasm Hume succeeds in devising a much more beautiful expression and also stronger formulation for this process of assimilation than we find in Spinoza’s text.

As in strings equally wound up, the motion of one communicates itself to the rest; so all the affections readily pass from one person to another, and *beget correspondent movements in every human creature* (p. 626). Thus it appears, that *sympathy* is a very powerful principle in human nature, that it has a great influence on our taste of beauty, and that it *produces our sentiments of morals in all the artificial virtues* (p. 628).

It is a bit surprising that Hume talks here, in the section dedicated to the origin of our natural virtues, about the origin of our artificial virtues! On the next page he returns to his intention to treat of what we ‘naturally’ approve or disapprove. His terminology is not always stable and well chosen, as he afterwards admits in his *Appendix* (p. 671). The distinction between natural and conventional attitudes or virtues cannot stand firm for scientists like Hume and Spinoza, who explain human conduct naturalistically, i.e. physically. Hume explicitly underlines this in section 3.3.4 (*Of natural abilities*): “Whoever considers the matter accurately will find that a dispute upon this head would be merely a dispute of words” (656). The way we communicate with each other is dependent upon our education, customs and conventions, but these factors are equally physical phenomena as our breathing and moving our body.

But might it be possible that Hume’s objective with section 3.3.1 about ‘natural virtues’ is above all this, that he wants to pay attention here to what is most becoming for man in the sense of making him more capable and giving him more power of survival? We don’t consider all attitudes having the same social value. We make difference between authentic or real and counterfeited or weak activities. In his ‘*system of ethics*’, a term Hume makes use of three times in his book *Of Morals*,¹⁴⁹ he seems to follow Spinoza’s systematic differentiation in the fourth part of the *Ethica* between two kinds of reactions, those with positive and those with negative effects. After having demonstrated how state building is the mechanical effect of our eagerly or anxiously reacting on everything that overcomes us, he immediately continues determining the two kinds of passions in view of their relation to our being a political society, the thing which is of highest interest for our safety. This criterion itself, as also the subsequent differentiation of passions, must have made, again, deep impression on Hume’s mind, as it may become evident from the next parallel presentation. Hume made the criterion even stronger by adding the word ‘*sole*’ and

¹⁴⁸ See my section 19 above.

¹⁴⁹ See 3.1.2 (p. 525); 3.3.4 (p. 656); 3.3.6 (p. 667). This last occurrence seems to contain a hint to Spinoza’s geometrical method: “I am hopeful that nothing is wanting **to an accurate proof** of this system of ethics”.

indicating in this way that moral behaviour in the sense of natural virtuosity only consists in contributing to the society as such.

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| <p>The tendency of qualities to the good of society is the <i>sole</i> cause of our approbation, without any suspicion of the concurrence of another principle. From thence we learn the force of that principle. And where that principle may take place, and the quality approv'd of is really beneficial to society, a <i>true philosopher</i> will never require any other principle to account for the strongest approbation and esteem (629).¹⁵⁰</p> | <p>Whatever is conducive to the common society of men (<i>quae ad hominum communem societatem conducunt</i>), or, whatever brings it about that men live together in agreement, is useful, and, on the contrary, that is bad which induces discord in the state (<i>Ethica</i> 4/40; p.170). By good (<i>bonum</i>) I understand that which we certainly know to be useful to us (4/def.1; p. 144).</p> |
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The 'true philosopher' may be identified as an epigone of Spinoza. No other philosopher in Western history had declared, let alone so strongly emphasized, that conductivity to the society, i.e. to the common good, is the unique criterion of moral value. On itself is nothing good or bad, but only in and by its positive or negative relation to the society in which we live.¹⁵¹

This criterion enables Spinoza and with him Hume to make a series of remarks on concrete attitudes, so called virtues or vices, in accordance whether they are useful or not for our living together. It strikes immediately the informed reader that Hume in this context makes use of the same kind of expression as Spinoza.

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| <p>We shall consider the vice or virtue that lies in their <i>excesses</i> or <i>just proportion</i> (3.3.2;p. 642).</p> | <p>There cannot be too much merriment (<i>hilaritas excessum habere nequit</i>), but it is always good; but, on the other hand, melancholy is always bad (E. 4/42; p. 171).</p> |
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Is it accidental that the etymologically same word *excess* / *excessum* appears on both sides in the comparative table? Hume embroiders further on this pattern in the concluding sections of his third book. Spinoza writes "Love and desire can be excessive" (*excessum habere possunt*, 4/44). The *scholium* to this proposition explains the evil: "When a miser thinks of nothing save money or profit, or an ambitious man of nothing save glory, these are not thought to be insane, for they tend to be harmful, and are thought worthy of hatred. But

¹⁵⁰ Compare also Hume's formulation of the political quality norm of human behaviour in his *Natural History of Religion*: "Nothing can preserve untainted the genuine principles of morals in our judgment of human conduct but the absolute necessity of these principles to the existence of society" (Section xiii). Nothing can be judged morally good but what is the *conditio sine qua non* of our political coexistence.

¹⁵¹ In this section *Treatise* 3.3.1 which is so deeply rooted in and is as a whole convergent with part 4 of the *Ethica*, there is another striking example of imaginative and verbal association. Discussing extensively the ideas 'perfect' and 'imperfect' in its *Preface*, Spinoza exemplifies more than once his exposition about so called 'general concepts' with the vague concept of a 'house' (*domus*) or a 'building' (*aedificium*), designed by an architect or not. Similar concepts are nothing but certain imaginations used as a standard, especially when they please us. An echo of this remarkable example is retrievable in Hume's text: "A *house*, that is contriv'd with great judgment for all the commodities of life, pleases us upon that account (p. 635). A house may displease me by being ill-contriv'd for the convenience of the owner... When a *building* seems clumsy and tottering to the eye, it is ugly and disagreeable ... The *seeming tendencies* of objects affect the mind ... The imagination adheres to the general views of things" (637).

in truth, avarice, ambition, lust etc. are nothing but species of madness, although they are not enumerated among diseases" (4/44s; p. 172). Both authors also illustrate the propensity of men to over-value themselves, the "over-weaning conceit of ourselves" (p. 646), with reference to the historical figure of Alexander the Great. To attest this Hume quotes a passage from the freethinker St. Evremond (p. 649),¹⁵² Spinoza, on his turn, refers in his *Theologico-Political Treatise* to the biographies of Alexander the Great by Curtius and Arrianos.¹⁵³ Both authors not only stress on various places that hatred, envy, derision, anger, vengeance etc. manifest our *impotence* (Spinoza) or *imbecillity* (Hume), but also that they considerably injure and threaten the social cohesion. All kinds or shoots of hatred are 'unlawful in the state' (*in civitate inustum*, 4/45c2). "Justice is certainly approv'd of for no other reason than because it has a tendency to the public good" (T. 3.3.6; p. 668). This sentence is part of Hume's "conclusion of his book" (3.3.6) *On Morals*!

41. Humanity

Hume still continues glancing through his favourite book and finds a few more underlined passages that had struck him and for which he bows his argument. The composition of his text becomes looser and looser and shows signs of his tiredness. In the section with the rather occasional title "Some farther reflections concerning natural virtues" (3.3.5) he affirms the close and very determinate correlation between the things we meet with and our reactions.

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| It may not be amiss, on this occasion, to remark the flexibility of our sentiments, and the several changes they so readily receive from the <i>objects</i> , with which they are conjoin'd... Sentiments, when directed to different objects, are different to the feeling, tho'derived from the same source (T. 3.3.5; p. 666-7). | There are as many species of pleasure, pain, desire, and consequently of any emotion which is composed of these, such as wavering of the mind, or which is derived from these, such as love, hate, fear, hope, etc. <i>as there are species of objects by which we are affected</i> (E. 3/56; p. 122). |
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As so often is the case, this is not a translation but a free and fully correct paraphrase of a Spinozistic item. Hume had found no opportunity to insert this point on its right place in his second book, his equivalent of Spinoza's third part. The 'occasion' he mentions, is far-fetched!

In the same psychological part of the *Ethica* he was struck by other fragments he has not yet given a place in his argument. Concerning our liability for infection by other people's positive or negative evaluation and our sensitiveness for their judgment he annotates again a semi-quote.

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| And this sympathy we sometimes carry so far as even to be displeas'd with a quality | We also shall endeavour to do everything which we imagine men (let it be understood |
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¹⁵² St. Evremond was one of the French 'esprits forts', who visited Spinoza in The Hague, shortly before he published the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*, and showed in his epistolary contacts with Morelli his sympathy with Spinoza's naturalism. It appears again, that Hume had also *indirect* connections with Spinoza via his friends and favourite authors.

¹⁵³ See ch. 11 in my *Spinoza classicus* (o.c.): "Curtius and Spinoza on the moral excesses of Aledander der Grote".

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| commodious to us, merely because it displeases others, and makes us disagreeable in their eyes (3.3.1; p. 640). The passions are so contagious, that they pass with the greatest facility from one person to another, and produce correspondent movements in all human breasts (3.3.3; p. 655). | in this and the following propositions that we mean men for whom we have no particular emotion) to regard with pleasure, and, on the other hand, we shall be averse to doing what we imagine men to turn away from (E. 3/29; p. 104). |
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The parallels are never perfect, but the influence of the master on the student of his text is undeniable.

Compassion is also a natural reaction according to Hume and Spinoza, albeit it is certainly not a virtue. Hume sketches a shipwreck passing before our eyes, so “that we can perceive distinctly the horror, painted on the countenance of the seamen and passengers, hear their lamentable cries, see the dearest friends give their last adieu...”. Spinoza would not be able to paint in a comparable way terrible disasters, but his description of the quite normal human reaction in those circumstances did inspire Hume.

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| No man has so savage e heart as to reap any pleasure from such a spectacle, or withstand the motions of the tenderest compassion and sympathy (T. 3.3.2;p. 645). [There is] such a principle in our nature as humanity or a concern for others ...(EPM no.190). It is needless to push our researches so far as to ask, why we have <i>humanity</i> or a fellow-feeling with others... No man is absolutely indifferent to the happiness and misery of others ... <i>Uti ridentibus arident, ita flentibus adflent / Humani vultus</i> ’- Hor. (note to EPM 178). | <i>Speremus partier, partier metuamus amantes / Ferreus est, si quis, quod sinit alter, amat</i> [of iron is who loves what the other leaves] (E. 3/31c; p. 106). I am speaking here expressly of a man who lives under the guidance of reason. For he who is moved neither by reason nor pity to help others is rightly called inhuman (<i>inhumanus</i>), for (Prop; 27, part III) he seems to be unlike a man (E. 4/50s; p. 175). |
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Hume must have thought: when Spinoza knows his classic authors, I will show I know them too. He replaces the Ovid-quote with a more appropriate Horace-quote, meaning that the human face laughs with the laughing and weeps with the weeping people.

Spinoza defines *humanitas seu modestia* as “the desire of doing such things as please men and omitting such as do not” (df. 43 in E. 3; p. 138). His correspondence shows abundantly that he warmly cherished this ideal in his contacts with fellow scientists and his friends. So also Hume greatly admires the “man of humanity” (T. 654) and certainly practiced the values of a gentleman in all respects . ‘Fellow-feeling’ (EPM no. 210) has a high priority in his ethical system. Rather impressive is also his assessment of the rules of civilisation,” the rules of Good Manners or Politeness, in order to facilitate the intercourse of minds and an undisturbed commerce and conversation. Among well-bred people, a mutual deference is affected; contempt of others disguised; authority concealed; attention given to each in his turn; and an easy stream of conversation maintained, without vehemence, without interruption, without eagerness for victory, and without any airs of superiority” (EPM no. 211). The last three items (no vehemence, no eagerness for victory, no airs of superiority)

are not fully applicable to Spinoza's way of life! Spinoza the radical 'political' writer was on the border of political activism. And he was absolutely sure to possess the truth. "I do not presume that I have found the best philosophy, but I know that what I understand is the true one" (Letter 76; p. 342).

42. *The perfection of the universe*

Everything is determined and could not have been produced in an other way than it actually originated. Human freedom is an illusion. Moral evil is a false notion. Vices are natural properties. Parricide is comparable with the overgrowth of old trees by their offshoots. Human behaviour is directed by the same principles as the behaviour of wild animals and moreover for hundred percent mechanically, according to fixed laws of nature. What could be wrong with nature?

Nothing. Not everything is pleasant or useful for us personally, but this is another thing. Absolute physical evil, i.e. a breach or suspension of the eternal laws of nature, is as impossible as human immorality. We don't have adequate knowledge of the moving principles, we have no survey of the whole which would permit us to criticize its working; as a particle of nature we are not enabled to compare the world with another world or discover eventually its finality towards a higher point or its degeneration from higher to lower levels. Of one thing we are absolutely sure at moments of meditation. Our constant and undeniable experience teaches us certain regularities in nature and inscrutable causal connections between some of its phenomena. In spite of many impenetrable events and miraculous sequences of facts we, inhabitants of the world, do in principle acknowledge its orderly composition, and trying to find its secrets we do our utmost to accommodate our behaviour to what we think reliable relations. The result of this process of our gradual enlightenment is marvellously summarized by Spinoza in his famous letter 32: man discovers by experience that the world is no chaos but must be a harmony, in which everything is connected with everything and agrees in a certain sense with everything, or better: is coerced to convene with it.¹⁵⁴ The word 'order' is maybe not very appropriate, because we see so much confusion. Nevertheless there is nothing wrong with it. And this is a conclusion in which Hume full heartedly joins Spinoza, certainly also under his influence, because apart from Buddha no other philosopher in the world's history anticipated this proposition.

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| Vice is as natural to mankind, as the particular instincts to brute-creatures. All ills arise from the order of the <i>universe</i> , which is <i>absolutely perfect</i> (Essays 18; p. 173). | [speaking in axiom 2/1 about the 'order of nature' (<i>naturae ordo</i>) Spinoza gives as definition 6:] Reality and perfection I understand to be the same (<i>per realitatem et perfectionem idem intelligo</i> , p. 38). |
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Hume's naturalism does not yield to Spinoza's. This is also strongly confirmed by another of his essays, namely the one "*Of Suicide*". Our death is no refutation of the perfection of the universe. It is only the configuration of particles of the universe which changes when we die. During the lethal transformation of our body our *bodies* (!) are reorganized into other forms and aggregations.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Hume's *Of Suicide*: "On the contrary, from the mixture, union, and contrast of all the various powers of inanimate bodies and living creatures, arises that *surprising harmony* and proportion, which affords the surest argument of supreme wisdom". See *Essays*, o.c. p. 581.

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| When I shall be dead, the principles, of which I am composed, will still perform their part in the universe, and will be equally useful in the grand fabric, as when they composed this individual creature (<i>Essays</i> p. 585). | I beg you, my friend, to consider that men are not created, but only begotten, and that <i>their bodies already existed before</i> , but in a different form. And I am quite willing to admit, that if one part of matter were to be annihilated, the whole of extension would also vanish at the same time (<i>Letter 4</i> . p. 69). [Blijenbergh had learned from Spinoza during an interview:] The human body on its disintegration is resolved into the thousands of bodies of which it was composed. And just as the separated bodies of our human body no longer remain united with one another and other bodies come between them..." (<i>Letter 24</i> , p. 171). |
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'Immortality of the soul' is no issue for Hume like for Spinoza. Concerning this subject I referred already in my section 6 to a very important passage of Hume of his posthumously published *Essay of the Immortality of the Soul*. I will not reiterate here his claim about the 'total dissolution' of our soul at the dissolution of our body. But the way he argues for this point reminds us of Spinoza's text in another sense, namely a similar methodological remark.

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| By what arguments or analogies can we prove any state of existence, which no one ever saw, and which no wise resembles any that ever was seen? Who will repose such trust in any pretended philosophy, as to admit upon its testimony the reality of so marvellous a scene [of the postmortal existence of our soul, wk]? <i>Some new species of logic is required</i> for that purpose, and some new faculties of mind, which may enable us to comprehend that logic (<i>Essays</i> p. 598). | Nor must I fail to note at this point that some of the adherents of this doctrine who have wished to show their ingenuity in assigning final causes to things, <i>have discovered a new manner of argument (novum modum argumentandi)</i> for the proving of their doctrine, to wit, not a reduction to the impossible, but a reduction to ignorance, which shows they have no other mode of arguing their doctrine (<i>Ethica</i> 1, appendix; p. 34). |
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43. Critique of false religion

Hume's *Essay "Of Superstition and Enthusiasm"* is a jewel of sharp analysis and comment. Its reader must, if well informed about Spinoza, be reminded of his fierce 'Preface' to the *Theological-political Treatise*, in which he likewise pushed off from shore for sketching the causes and nocuous effects of superstition. *Both philosophers oppose on their first pages false religion against authentic or true religion.*

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| By the pernicious effects of superstition and enthusiasm, the corruptions of <i>true</i> religion. These two species of <i>false</i> religion ... (<i>Essays</i> , p. 73). | Immense pains have therefore been taken to counteract this evil by investing <i>religion</i> , <i>whether true or false</i> , with such pomp and ceremony ... (TTP pref.; p. 5). |
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According to both the main causes responsible for the origin of false, that is superstitious, religion are fright, greediness, over-boldness. On account of a different order of the stuff it is in this case rather difficult to put precise pendants next to each other. We, therefore, take large fragments, the one integrally, the other broken. For those who read them with due attention it will become plausible that also for his explanation of superstition Hume may have found inspiration in Spinoza's text. His text looks like a paraphrase.

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| <p><i>The mind of man is subject to certain unaccountable terrors and apprehensions, proceeding either from the unhappy situation of private or public affairs, from ill health, from a gloomy and melancholy disposition, or from the concurrence of all these circumstances. In such a state of mind, infinite unknown evils are dreaded from unknown agents; and where real objects of terror are wanting, the soul, active to its own prejudice, and fostering its predominant inclination, finds imaginary ones, to whose power and malevolence it sets no limits. As these enemies are entirely invisible and unknown, the methods taken to appease them are equally unaccountable, and consist in ceremonies, observances, mortifications, sacrifices, presents, or in any practice, however absurd or frivolous, which either folly or knavery recommends to a blind and terrified credulity. Weakness, fear, melancholy, together with ignorance, are, therefore, the true sources of superstition (Essays, p. 73-74).</i></p> | <p>Men would never be superstitious, if they could govern all their circumstances by set rules, or if they were always favoured by fortune; but being frequently driven into straits where rules are useless, and being often kept fluctuating pitiably between hope and fear by the uncertainty of fortune's greedily coveted favours, they are consequently, for the most part, very prone to credulity... If anything happens during their fright which reminds them of some past good or ill, they think it portends a happy or unhappy issue, and therefore (though it may have proved abortive a hundred times before) style it a lucky or unlucky omen. Anything which excites their astonishment they believe to be a portent signifying the anger of the gods or of the Supreme Being, and, mistaking superstition for religion, account it impious not to avert the evil with prayer and sacrifice. Signs and wonders of this sort they conjure up perpetually, till one might think Nature as mad as themselves, they interpret her so fantastically. <i>Superstition, then, is engendered, preserved, and fostered by fear.</i> Take Alexander, who only began superstitiously to seek guidance from seers... <i>Under the dominion of fear do men fall a prey to superstition.</i> All the portents ever invested with the reverence of misguided religion are mere phantoms of dejected and fearful minds (TTP p. 3-4).</p> |
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Hume's and Spinoza's natural history of superstition is not in all points the same. The main common thing, however, is that they affirm the causal relation between fear and superstition. This is not an original explanation; one finds it in many classical authors. Spinoza summarizes in this context the well known theory of the Epicurean Lucretius about

terror as source of religion into his atomic formula "*Tantum timor hominess insanire facit*" (Such is the unreason to which terror drives mankind).¹⁵⁵

Subsequent to and in connection with this subject Hume gives some further 'reflections'. The first is, "that superstition is favourable to priestly power" (*Essays* p. 75). Superstition flourishes when people are troubled, sullen or depressed. They, then, get a sense of inferiority and feel themselves weak. Other people announce themselves in order to help them in their distress. Priests or pastors misuse the situation and can do so easily on account of the credulity of the patients. They crop up as interpreters of the feared but invisible divine power and prescribe the innocent believers on God's authority new dogma's. In fact, they impose unheard off rules of life by which they bind them to their own advantage. "The stronger the mixture there is of superstition, the higher is the authority of the priesthood" (75). "Till at last the priest, having firmly established his authority, becomes the tyrant and disturber of human society" (78). "As to ecclesiastical parties, we may observe, that, in all ages of the world, priests have been enemies to liberty; and it is certain, that this steady conduct of theirs must have been founded on fixed reasons of interest and ambition. Liberty of thinking and of expressing our thoughts, is always fatal to priestly power, and to those pious frauds on which it is commonly founded".¹⁵⁶ It may be superfluous to quote here the many places where Spinoza in his *Theologica-political Treatise* denounces the disastrous influence of the '*ecclesiastici*', always hankering after political superiority. This is – and he illustrates it abundantly with historical examples – the greatest threat for a free republic, precisely as Hume emphasized in his third reflection that 'superstition is an enemy to civil liberty' (78). It is the main theme, as it were the 'lion's cry', of the author in the Preface to the TTP against the absurdities and pernicious effects of superstition for political stability. It ought to be quoted here in full. In the 19th chapter Spinoza throws up his firewall against this spam: "in which it is shown that the right over matters spiritual lies wholly with the sovereign, and that the outward forms of religion should be in accordance with public peace, if we would obey God aright" (p.245). In the antecedent, 18th, chapter he had previously extensively discussed the fatal power grasp of the Pharisees after the rebellion of the Macchabees, which lead to the ruin of the Jewish state. This chapter was meant as a warning for the Dutch state, where the Contra-Remonstrant movement threatened to subdue totally sound reason and free politics. Hume did not need to provide historical illustrations, because these were already, in his language and in line with Spinoza, amply presented by Bernard Mandeville in *Free Thoughts on Religion, Church and National Happiness* (1720/1729).¹⁵⁷

Closely related to this subject is what Hume calls '*enthusiasm*', about which Locke had written fascinating pages in his *Essay concerning Human Understanding*.¹⁵⁸ This typical term of the modern times indicates the 'being out of one self' or the 'prophetic ecstasy' of people who see themselves in the immediate neighbourhood of or one with God and think as well as pretend to receive direct revelation from him. Normally they are not susceptible of reason, they are 'reason proof'! "When this frenzy once takes place, which is the summit of enthusiasm, every whimsy is consecrated. Human reason, and even morality are rejected as fallacious guides" (74). Frenzy! Did also Spinoza not conspicuously and with great emphasis qualify the credulous belief of superstitious people as an '*insanire*'? I underlined the word

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* 1.101: 'Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum'.

¹⁵⁶ This last quote is from the essay *Of the parties of Great Britain* (p. 66).

¹⁵⁷ See the section "Intrigues of the priest craft accused" in my *John Locke's Disguised Spinozism*, o.c. p. 50-52.

¹⁵⁸ Fourth book, chapter 19.

in my quote above. A little bit later in the same *Preface* the word appears even more prominently in his text. And this cannot have escaped Hume's attention. "Piety, great God! And religion are become a tissue of ridiculous mysteries; men, who flatly despise reason, who reject and turn away from understanding as naturally corrupt, these, I say, these of all men, are thought, O lie most horrible! to possess light from on High. Verily, if they had but one spark of light from on High, they would not insolently rave (*non tam superbe insanirent*) ... Not content to rave with the Greeks themselves (*cum Gracis insanire*), they want to make the prophets rave also" (p. 7). It seems not to be accidental that also Hume qualifies religious enthusiasm as insanity. He follows Spinoza's exemplary description.

Hume joins Spinoza also in this respect that he thinks that superstition and enthusiasm cannot be prevented nor overcome by political measures. As we saw earlier: the first and second kind of perception are powerless against our being the slaves of our passion. Preaching nor abstract reasoning is helpful to make us free persons; we need true philosophy, enlightenment through experience. "When sound philosophy has once gained possession of our mind [this is Spinoza's and Hume's third kind of knowledge, *wk*], superstition is effectually excluded" (*Of suicide, Essays* p. 579).

In the first quote of this section we saw Hume making distinction between two kinds of false religion against the 'true religion'. Did he also explain in a positive sense the kernel of true religion? Not explicitly in an essay, chapter or treatise, but only in a footnote to, curiously enough, his *History of England*. In his *Theological-political Treatise* Spinoza had demonstrated that the prophets, above all Christ, aimed at nothing but morally decent behaviour, more specifically the realisation of justice and love of neighbours in one's society, by obedience to its laws. The so called Revelation does not comprise or prescribe theological dogma's, but only *love of justice and charity*, as it is called in *Letter 76* to Burgh, which love leads reasonable man to obey the civil magistracy. Citizenship in this sense is the only way towards practicing justice and charity. Well, it is precisely this hard core of the TTP, which Hume took over or implicitly referred to in his extraordinary remark in his *History of England*.

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| The proper office of religion is to reform men's lives, to purify their hearts, to enforce all moral duties, and to secure obedience to the laws and civil magistracy. ¹⁵⁹ | And I further point out that the revealed Word of God consists in nothing than the mandate to obey God with whole his heart by practicing justice and charity (<i>Deo integro animo obedire iustitiam et caritatem colendo</i>) (TTP p. 9). ¹⁶⁰ |
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True religion, after all, coincides with citizenship.

44. *Proposals for a political organization*

Van den Enden nor Spinoza hesitated to give concrete advices for a healthy constitution safeguarding security and peace. On the other hand, neither Locke nor Mandeville went so far as to follow their example. They wanted not burn their fingers on practical proposals. How is it with Hume in this respect? In his essay "*Idea of a perfect commonwealth*" he

¹⁵⁹ The note is in the *variorum edition*, rec. 14673. I found it in F. J. van Holthoorn, *Hume. Leven en werk* (Kampen: Klement 2009), p. 153.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. the title of TTP, ch. 19: "It is shown that the right of matters spiritual lies wholly with the sovereign, and that the outward form of religion should be in accordance with public peace, if we would obey god aright".

develops a few ideas, which are comparable with Spinoza's and, moreover, go in the same direction, but they are hardly elaborated. In general he is no supporter of a renewal, let alone a revolutionary, of whatever existing system. In his view radical innovations are mostly doomed to failure and bring normally more evil than good in a society. It is not so easy to realise a new political order than to build a new ship. With typical English humour he remarks that "an established government has an infinite advantage by that very circumstance of its being established" (*Essays* p. 512). The credit of its antiquity is not so easily compensated by another advantage. The best thing we can do is to "adjust innovations, as much as possible, to the ancient fabric" (*ib.* p. 513). Hume, therefore, is uttermost sceptical about revolutionary political programs. Here we can put one of his critical notes alongside one of Spinoza's critiques on philosophical 'imaginations' about a better system.

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| All plans of government, which suppose great reformation in the manners of mankind, are plainly <i>imaginary</i> . Of this nature are the <i>Republic</i> of Plato, and the <i>Utopia</i> of sir Thomas More. The <i>Oceana</i> is the only valuable model of a commonwealth, that has yet been offered to the public (<i>Essays</i> p. 514) | Philosophers conceive of men not as they are, but as they themselves would like them to be. Whence it has come to pass that, instead of ethics, they have generally written satire, and that they have never conceived a theory of politics, which could be turned to use but such as might be taken for a chimera, or might have been formed in <i>Utopia</i> , or in that golden age of the poets, when, to be sure, there was least need of it (TP 1/1; p. 287). |
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Naturally the anti-Platonist Spinoza precedes Hume in rejecting the chimerical system of Plato's *State*. Plato's authority has little value for him, as he remarked in Letter 56.¹⁶¹ The practical politician who wants to be effective, grounds upon human nature as it really is and handles its properties as a lever for reaching the common good. "Statesmen have written about politics far more happily than philosophers. For, as they had experience for their mistress, they taught nothing that was inconsistent with practice" (TP 1.2; p. 288). Clever as they are, they will never moralize or preach like a pastor. *Good behaviour can only be the effect of good government.*

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| Not to mention, that general virtue and <i>good morals in a state</i> , which are so requisite to happiness, can never arise from the most refined precepts of philosophy, or even the severest injunctions of religion, but must proceed entirely from the virtuous education of youth, <i>the effect of wise laws and institutions</i> (<i>Essays</i> p. 55). | For it is certain, that seditions, wars, and <i>contempt or breach of the laws are not so much to be imputed to the sickness of the subjects, as to the bad state of a dominion</i> . For men are not born fit for citizenship, but must be made so. Besides, men's natural passions are everywhere the same; and if wickedness more prevails, and more offences are committed in one commonwealth than in another, it is certain that the former has not enough pursued the |
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¹⁶¹ "The authority of Plato, Aristotle and Socrates carries little weight with me" (*Correspondence* p. 279).

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| | end of unity, nor framed its laws with sufficient forethought (TP 5/2; p. 313-314). ¹⁶² |
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In his comments on Harrington's *Oceana* Hume rather often reacts with consent on points that are heavily stressed by Spinoza in his *Political Treatise* too. The general line is in both cases, that the 'republic of the commonwealth' has to be build up and composed from the bottom upwards. In first instance all authority lies in the cities and is owned by its citizens according to a *census*. The 'householders worth 500 pounds' constitute the voting counsel, which chooses from its midst the so-called 'freeholders of twenty pounds a-year' as their deputies in the county. This happens *by ballot*. The 100 deputies of the county designate from their midst by ballot ten magistrates and a senator. The result, then, is the government of the state, consisting of 100 senators, 1100 county magistrates and 10000 county representatives (516). The republic starts at the basis, because a city is "a republic within itself" (p. 520). An important rule, heavily stressed also by Spinoza and Van den Enden, is that no magistrate, deputy or senator receives a salary. The argument is that they serve the common interest and general freedom, from which they themselves have also great profit. Because the governing councils consist of great numbers of citizens with different professions one may expect that things will be decided in conformity with the general view.

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| Though every member [of this great body] be only of middling sense, it is not probable, that any thing but reason can prevail over the whole. Influence and example being removed, good sense will always get the better of bad among a number of people (<i>Essays</i> p. 523). | And so it is evident, that if from every sort or class of citizens a certain number be chosen, what has most votes in such a council will be to the interest of the greater part of the subjects (TP 7/4; p. 329). Men's natural abilities are too dull to see through everything at once; but by consulting, listening, and debating, the members grow more acute, and while they are trying all means, they at last discover those which they want, which all approve, but no one would have thought of in the first instance (TP 9/14; p. 376). |
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The coordinated quotes are not precisely each other's counterpart. Searching, however, their context the reader will discover that Hume's confidence in the democratic model of political decision differs not an inch from Spinoza's more elaborated defence of democratic rules. Highly important is also that Hume, like Van den Enden and Spinoza before him, considers every citizen who is able enough to care for his own living, capable for becoming a good councillor. Elitism is far from their bed. "Almost any man, in a senate so regularly chosen by the people, may be supposed fit for any civil office" (p. 524). Further they share the view that the governing colleges need not only be large but also that their membership may never be for a long term and should have a fast flow, this in order to prevent corruption. "Not to mention, that it is a necessary precaution in a free state to change the governors frequently". All these points are clearly anticipated by Spinoza. And it is not

¹⁶² See also F. van den Enden: "it is evident that all violent and bad passions of people are to be imputed to violence of the government", VPS in Klever, *Directe Democratie*, p. 27.

improbable that Hume was struck by his demonstration of their value for 'a perfect commonwealth'. Finally it is also interesting to see that Hume exemplifies his idea by referring to the organisation of the Dutch Republic, which was totally different from other states in Europe in the 17th and 18th century. The autonomy and sovereignty was primarily in the cities, secondarily in their confederation in the Provincial States, and from there derived to the General States. "That the foregoing plan of government is practicable, no one can doubt, who considers the resemblance that it bears to the commonwealth of the United Provinces, a wise and renowned government" (*Essays* p. 526). But more than the actual Dutch system it were Spinoza's political ideas, different from the Dutch practice, that inspired him.

45. The natural history of religion

In the already mentioned innovative article "Hume and Spinoza", Richard Popkin, the great historian of Modern Philosophy, broke a lance for a regauge of our vision on the relation between Spinoza and Hume.

Hume's book, with the bizarre title, *The Natural History of Religion*, could probably not have been written had Spinoza not paved the way in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* for the historical and psychological and sociological evaluation of religion.¹⁶³

Various parallel quotes above offered more than a confirmation of Popkin's suggestion about the relation of Hume's philosophy of religion to Spinoza's. The NHR (as we will abbreviate the title) reveals, however, many other affinities. The essay was written between 1749 and 1751, the same period, in which the first draft of the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (forthwith 'Dialogues') originated, more than ten years after the *Treatise* was written. The text was published seven years later, in 1757, as part of the *Five Dissertations*, to which also the radical essays *Of the Immortality of the Soul* and *Of Suicide* belonged. Given the fact that his chances for a professorship were gone –in vain he had applied for a cathedra in Edinburgh (1745) and Glasgow (1752) – there were no longer good reasons for being so cautious as in the time before, when he had still aspirations for a career. Why should he? In the publicity he was now known, thanks his enemies and competitors, as the enlightened naturalist; he had nothing to loose. Moreover, the author of the 'bestseller' *History of England* had acquired a great reputation, which gave him a certain unassailability in the public space and also courage for being honest. He now dared to publish more freely about the prosaic and profane origin of religious phenomena and to give expression to some hidden motives behind his previous work. This courage, however, was not so great that he dared to take the risk for publishing the quite radical disputation concealed in the *Dialogues*, which would certainly make him vulnerable for persecution. Therefore he destined them for posthumous publication.¹⁶⁴ From these biographical details one may a posteriori conclude or at least surmise that there will be visible a difference between the boldness of the *Dialogues* and the 'immunized' position in the NHR. On the other hand the undisputable correlation between the texts permits us to take advantage of the double bottom of the latter text: innocuous for outsiders, rich for insiders who understand the symbols. Spinoza's massive presence in the NHR, this brilliant and even magisterial but often neglected text of Hume, appears in its begin, in the middle and at the end. Everywhere one

¹⁶³ O.c. p. 70.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. J. C. A. Gaskin, *Hume's Philosophy of Religion* (London second edition 1988), p. 1-5.

looks at Spinoza's fingerprints. For this purpose one ought to turn more to Spinoza's own 'history of religion' in the *appendix* to part 1 of the *Ethica* (this really is its content) than to what Popkin suggests, the *Theological-Political Treatise*, which treatise is properly Spinoza's own apology for his being a good citizen. But the NHR contains much more than only a causal explanation of religions. The treatise discusses also "the impious conceptions of the divine nature", which one meets with in all kinds of popular religion (section 13) and digresses on their detestable effects on public morals (section 14).

Hume starts by telling us that the source of religion is not an inborn instinct comparable with our natural 'self-love' or the natural affection of the two sexes for each other. Religion originates in the evolution of our species and is the result of the history of man's circumstances. The first and original form of what appears for our historical perspective as religion is *polytheism*. The theory that humans in first instance conclude from the regularity and order of nature to the existence of an almighty creator and provider, has to be rejected, says Hume, because this regularity does not strike them at all. They find it fully normal: so is nature. What on the contrary really strikes them and makes them think of supernatural causes, are the experienced and not understood irregularities: the calamities, disasters and alarming phenomena that disquiet them and cause insecurity and fright. The primitive religion of 'uninstructed mankind'¹⁶⁵ consists in ascribing *exceptional* happenings to therefore responsible dreamt up superpowers or specific agents, to which one consequently tries to come in a good relation by means of prayers and offerings.

Spinoza and Hume describe both the unavoidability of the human path from ignorance of mechanical causes via fear for mysterious powers to a kind of religion, but also the possibility of superseding it by means of science.

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| <p>We are placed in this world, as in a great theatre, where the true springs and causes of every event are entirely concealed from us... The <i>unknown causes</i>, thus, become the constant object of our <i>hope and fear</i>.... <i>Could</i>¹⁶⁶ men anatomize nature, according to the most probable, at least the most intelligible philosophy, they would find, that these causes are nothing but the particular fabric and structure of the minute parts of their own bodies and of external objects, and that, by a regular and constant machinery, all the events are produced, about which they are so much concerned. But <i>this philosophy</i>¹⁶⁷ exceeds the comprehension of the <i>ignorant multitude</i></p> | <p>Enquiring in the first place why so many acquiesce in this prejudice and why all are by nature prone to embrace it ... : all men are born <i>ignorant of the causes</i> of things ... They were forced to conclude that there is some governor or governors, endowed with human freedom ... Whence it has come about that each individual has devised different ways of <i>worshipping</i> God, that God will love him above the rest and direct the whole nature for the gratification of his blind cupidity and insatiable avarice ... The truth <i>would</i> have remained hidden from the human race through all eternity, had not <i>mathematics</i>, which deals not in final causes, but in the essences and properties of</p> |
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¹⁶⁵ This expression is typical for Mandeville and appears passim in his work for characterizing the unenlightened primitive man.

¹⁶⁶ This conditional '*could*' reflects certainly Spinoza's '*would*'. In the hypothetical situation that men are true mathematical philosophers, they are fully enlightened about the real situation and know that things are mechanically produced according to the laws of nature. They will no longer be subject to fear and superstition.

¹⁶⁷ On account of Hume's description of its content the 'philosophy' he speaks about may be identified as Spinoza's mathematical science, which liberates man from his illusions.

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| (NHR p. 316). | figures, offered to men another standard of truth (<i>Ethica</i> 1, App. p. 32-33). |
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In their genetic explanation of religion both emphasize unisono the human custom to imagine the supposed governor(s) of the world theatre in analogy to themselves.

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| There is a universal tendency among mankind to <i>conceive all beings like themselves...</i> ¹⁶⁸ Nay, philosophers cannot entirely exempt themselves from this natural frailty, but have oft ascribed to inanimate matters the horror of a vacuum, sympathies, antipathies, ¹⁶⁹ and other affections of human nature. The absurdity is not less, while we cast our eyes upwards, and transferring, as is too usual, human passions and infirmities to the deity, represent him as jealous and revengeful, capricious and partial, and, in short, a wicked and foolish man in any respect but his superior power and authority (NHR p. 371). No better expedient than to represent them as intelligent <i>voluntary agents like ourselves</i> (ib. p. 328). | And thus they necessarily estimate their natures by their own (<i>ex suo ingenio ingenium alterius necessario iudicant</i>) ... Governor or governors, <i>endowed with human freedom</i> , who have taken care of all things for them ... (<i>Ethica</i> 1/App.32) |
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My purpose in giving these much fragmentized quotations of the similar argumentation of the both philosophers is only to demonstrate that Hume must have drawn inspiration from Spinoza. This claim becomes even more convincing when we discover a fragment in which three words are the same. If Hume had no good reasons to conceal his source, we would be entitled to call this plagiarism.

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| Thus it may be allowed that the artifices of men aggravate our natural infirmities and follies of this kind, but never originally beget them. <i>Their root strikes deeper into the mind</i> , and springs from the essential and universal properties of human nature (p.301). | Thus this prejudice became a superstition, and <i>fixed its roots deeply in the mind</i> (et <i>altas in mentibus egit radices</i>) (<i>Ethica</i> 1/App.; p. 33). |
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¹⁶⁸ On this place Hume often uses the word *genius* that comes close to Spinoza's *ingenium*. So he writes that in the primitive imagination "each grove or field is represented as possessed of a particular *genius* or invisible power, which inhabits and protects it (p. 317).

¹⁶⁹ Following Spinoza (*Ethica* 3/15s) Hume had in his *Treatise* 1.3.4 (p. 274) characterized sympathy and antipathy in nature as 'fictions' and had called the acceptance of these occult properties by old philosophers as "so signal a weakness'.

It is amazing that this crypto-quotation in an identical context and with its strong linguistic agreement was never remarked before by the numerous scholars who dedicate their energy to the disclosure of the meaning of either Spinoza's or Hume's writings.

Monotheism is according to Hume a development of a much later date than the polytheism of the earliest periods of human civilization. What Hume says about this subject in NHR is rather ambivalent: he leaves undecided their being rational or irrational, as if he would like to say 'make your own choice, then I'll not burn my hand'. He anyhow lets glimmer through, that monotheism originates from the time that mankind was technically advanced and knew already the writing culture. What he certainly does not pass over in silence is, that monotheistic religions were as guilty of absurd representations of the deity as polytheistic religions and had even more evil effects on civil morals. "Religionists, in all ages, have involved themselves in the greatest *absurdities and contradictions*" (p. 332). As an example Hume mentions here the ridiculous dogma of God's real presence in the consecrated wafer (p. 343), also referred to by Spinoza in his Letter 76.¹⁷⁰ To this we might appropriately compare Spinoza's tirades against his contemporary Christians, in which he denounced their abhorrence of the normal use of our reason. "Piety, great God! and religion are become a tissue of ridiculous mysteries (*absurdis arcanis*); men, who flatly despise reason, who reject and turn away from understanding as naturally corrupt, these, I say, these of all men are thought, O lie most horrible! to possess light from on High... Not content to rave (*insanire*) with the Greeks themselves, they want to make the prophets rave (*delirare*) also" (TTP pref.; p. 7). Likewise and equally sharp Hume denounces the curious and idiotic religious ideas of the godhead as '*sick men's dreams*'.

Normally monotheists, of whatever sect or offshoot, are extremely intolerant versus people of different belief, an attitude that one does not find among polytheists. "The intolerance of almost all religions, which have maintained the unity of God, is as remarkable as the contrary principle of polytheists. The implacable narrow spirit of the Jews is well known.

Mahometanism set out with still more bloody principles; and even to this day deals out damnation, though not fire and faggot, to all other sects" (p. 337).¹⁷¹ The various branches of monotheism fight against each other's dogmatic fixations with fire and sword. Most of them are fully contrary to reason. As a consequence simple believers who cannot follow the details of their leading theologians, feign as if they accept what they are not persuaded of. Externally, however, they assure clamorous and in pious superstition the official orthodoxy, which does not live in their heart.

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| <p>The usual course of men's conduct belies their words ((p. 348). Hear the <i>verbal protestations</i> of all men: nothing so certain as their religious tenets. <i>Examine their lives</i>. You will scarcely think that they repose the smallest confidence in them (p. 362).</p> | <p>Matters have long since come to such a pass, that one can only pronounce a man Christian, Turk, Jew, or Heathen, by his general appearance and attire, by his frequenting this or that place of worship, or <i>swear (iurare) by the phraseology</i> of a particular sect – <i>as for manner of life</i>, it is in all cases the same (<i>vita omnibus eadem est</i>)(TTP pref. p. 6).</p> |
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¹⁷⁰ "Now these *absurdities* might so far be tolerated if you worshipped a God infinite and eternal, not one whom Chastillon, in a town which the Dutch call Tienen, gave to horses to eat, and was not punished" (p. 341).

¹⁷¹ Hume's parenthesis (though not fire and faggot) seems no longer valid in our times.

This is again a free paraphrase. Both philosophers emphasize the opposition between doctrine and life. Both affirm in the context that superstitious piety, stimulated and organized by the *priestcraft* to their own advantage, have pernicious effects on civil society and are highly conducive to the criminal excesses. Encouragement of would-be virtues like humility and submission, the exercise of frivolous obligations, untempered religious zeal and ecstatic caprices etc., all this is detrimental to a good society, which is characterized by courage and civil obedience. "Even priests, instead of correcting these depraved ideas of mankind, have often been found ready to foster and encourage them. The more tremendous the divinity is represented, the more tame and submissive do men become to his ministers" (p. 360).¹⁷²

The very last sentence of the fascinating essay *Natural History of Religion* is again an implicit reference to the passage in the Appendix to the first part of the *Ethica*, in which Spinoza explains, that we cannot become liberated from our sickly religious insanities, *unless* (*nisi*) we keep to the method and results of science or are determined by other causes to realize our infatuations. In a similar grammatical turn Hume describes here, that the whole will remain for us a riddle, an enigma, an inexplicable mystery, unless... "Doubt, uncertainty, suspense of judgment appear the only result of our most accurate scrutiny concerning the subject. But such is the frailty of human reason and such the irresistible contagion of opinion, that even this deliberate doubt could scarcely be upheld, *did we not enlarge our view*, and opposing one species of superstition to another, set them a quarrelling, while we ourselves, during their fury and contention, happily make our escape, into the calm, though obscure,¹⁷³ regions of philosophy" (p. 363). The 'enlargement of our view' by means of a strict 'science of man', called by Spinoza '*mathesis*' and indicated here by Hume as 'philosophy' is the only way to enlightenment and freedom. The connection of this passage with Spinoza's 'natural history of religion' in the *Ethica* is undeniable.¹⁷⁴

Popkin was right in concluding that Hume was "originally overtly interested in Spinoza", except for this, that this conclusion is much too weak.¹⁷⁵ Spinoza, especially the Appendix to part 1 of the *Ethica* (and not so much his TTP), was Hume's source of inspiration for all the main items of his essay on the natural history of religion. If Hume effectuated a 'perestroika' in the history of religions, Spinoza more so before him and as the 'machine' with soft ware

¹⁷² Cf. section 53 (on superstition and religious enthusiasm) and section 53 (on the intrigues of the priestcraft) in my *Mandeville*, o.c., and likewise chapter 16 ("Flavius Josephus and Spinoza on religious fundamentalism as a political fission fungus") in my *Spinoza classicus* o.c.

¹⁷³ 'Obscure' must be read as 'abstract' on account of its difficult and paradox character.

¹⁷⁴ Actually the agreement of Hume with Spinoza does go a little further. Spinoza continues his quoted phrase as follows: "And besides mathematics there are other causes (which need not be enumerated here) which enabled men to take notice of these general prejudices and to be led to the true knowledge of things" (p. 33). In fact Hume *explains* this by adding to his paraphrase: "opposing one species of superstition to another, set them a quarrelling". Doing so we realize the feeble and disputable character of the truth claims of the insane believers and acquire wisdom by the lessons of various experiences. It is interesting to notice that we dispose of a very old copy of Spinoza's *Opera Posthuma* (conserved in the Leiden University Library) in which an intimate of Spinoza glossed in the margin: "Attention for the diversity of experiences. Taking into account the reasons why they have meant it. Consideration of the differences between their fables about the Gods, which are not smart enough devised". I published this and other marginal remarks in my *Ethicom. Spinoza's Ethica vertolkt in tekst en commentaar* (Delft: Eburon 1996). The last mentioned item is identical with Hume's parenthesis. Hume had no inside information like Spinoza's intimate, the first owner of the copy of the OP. But he surely had a good understanding of Spinoza's intention.

¹⁷⁵ See his "Hume and Spinoza" o.c. p. 90.

programming Hume's brain. Not one of the crypto-quotations above was discovered by Richard Popkin or any other author.

46. *The nature of Nature*

As we saw above Hume discussed religion extensively in the *Natural History of Religion* and in his essay *Of Superstition and Enthusiasm*. In spite of its differently sounding title this was not really the case in *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, which originated in the same period as NHR, about the year 1750. The title is misleading. Instead of religion the existence of God is, indeed, a subject of the discussion, but even this only marginally. The 'argument from design' was already refuted in *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.¹⁷⁶ Philo's 'devastating attack upon the argument from design', as it was characterized by Henry Aiken,¹⁷⁷ does not contain new points of view and cannot be considered as its main theme. Philo is one of the four participants in the dialogue, who is generally deemed to represent Hume's own view.¹⁷⁸ Next to him there are the marginal figure Pamphilus, who is only a narrator, the orthodox believer Demea and a Cleanthes, who can be seen as an enlightened Stoic proposing the argument from design.¹⁷⁹ De *Dialogues* is conceived to the model of Cicero's *De natura Deorum*, in which precisely this argument plays an important role. In the 17th and 18th century this classical text was read on all Latin schools and therefore generally known. Hume tries to make us believe that he only imitates this predecessor, perhaps slightly actualizing the argument.

His renewal, however, is very radical. What he picks up or develops from Cicero's disputation is no longer an adaptation of Plato or the Stoa. He, in fact, presents Spinoza in disguise. Naturally his name is not mentioned. That is still impossible, not only on account of the general damnation of his monstrous philosophy in the conservative England of those days. The older Hume loved a comfortable life, and tried to evade disquieting accusations, fiery polemics and eventual persecution.

This writer does not know secondary literature, in which is properly demonstrated or at least indicatively suggested that the Philo-Hume is imbued with Spinozism. Hume is generally thought to dislike Spinoza's absurd metaphysics as he showed in his *Treatise*, and that is it. All his writings have to be read in this spur of opposition.¹⁸⁰ But someone has to be the first to correct this misunderstanding. I take this task on my shoulders. My claim is, formulated in short, that the subject of the *Dialogues* is not the nature of religion nor the fictive deities of the heathens, but the '*Deus sive Natura*' of Spinoza, or better still: the nature of Nature. It is precisely in this text, that that the first empty space in the scheme presented in our third section, the place opposite to Spinoza's *De Deo*, is adequately filled up. The *Dialogues* contain Hume's 'general physics', just like the first part of the *Ethica* presents Spinoza's general physics. Our relating the *Dialogues* to Spinoza's *Ethics* 1, however,

¹⁷⁶ See our section 36 above.

¹⁷⁷ In his introduction to his edition of the *Dialogues* (New York: Hafner, 18e impr. 1977), from which I quote.

¹⁷⁸ "Philo consistently argues from philosophical principles which are distinctively Humean and whose arguments against Cleanthes are never successfully countered" (Aiken, o.c. p. xiii).

¹⁷⁹ The names are not totally arbitrary. 'Demea' might be derived from 'dèmos'; he is as it were the man of the people, an ordinary believer. 'Cleanthes' clearly refers to the historical Cleanthes of the 'old Stoa'.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. e.g. this general opinion in J.C.A. Gaskin's trendsetting monography about *Hume's Philosophy of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 2nd impr. 1988). – In 2007, however, participating a conference of the British Society for the History of Philosophy, I attended to a lecture of Kenneth Williford about "Philo's stealthy Spinozism". I could not find a publication of this lecture. The lecturer mentioned my articles in the *Hume Studies* and was astonished that I was still alive.

does not intend to exclude other parts from the *Ethica* for this purpose. One might especially think at the Preface of *Ethica*, part 3, with its nuclear introduction of Spinoza's evolutionary theory that Hume embraced rather cordially.

After this global preparation we eagerly want to find the thread of the argument in order to get before our eyes the unfolding of the capital theme. The discussion in part I of the *Dialogues* runs out into a rejection of scepticism. Our faculty of cognition is, indeed, rather weak, but we are nevertheless able to acquire relatively certain knowledge on the basis of constant experience. Even evidence concerning general laws of nature is not excluded. Accordingly the religious Demea is admonished to stop his action against the reason, as if reason was totally handicapped and worthless.

This conclusion creates in *Part II* for Cleanthes, so he thinks, enough space for ascending by means of an analogy reasoning to our Creator. The world is 'a great machine' (p. 17), in which all parts are carefully adjusted to each other. A divine engineer has to be considered responsible for such a perfect organization, because nothing does exist without a specific cause, precisely as a house supposes an architect. The 'finality', that Cleanthes, like also Demea, thinks to perceive in the world on account of its order, regularity and cohesion, is effectively countered by Philo. One can only conclude that B is consciously and purposively produced by A *if* one had experience of such a production. We could not experience the origin of the world because we are its part. As not being covered by or founded on any experience the supposition of a goal-directed fabrication of the world, is, therefore, nothing but an illusion. "Can you pretend to show any such similarity between the fabric of a house and the generation of a universe? ... Have worlds ever been formed under your eye and have you had leisure to observe the whole progress of the phenomenon, from the first appearance of order to its final consummation?" (p. 25). Finality in nature can no way be observed or legitimized by experience, and is only a prejudice originating from our putative freedom to organize provisionally our own life and our custom to project this on the world around us. In the above discussed *Appendix* to *Ethica* 1, by which Hume was so much fascinated, Spinoza had explained our usual projection of finality on nature as such out of our ignorance and consigned it to the realm of fables.

In *Part III* Cleanthes tries to fetch over his fellows to his side by referring to the splendid structure of the eye. "Consider, anatomize the eye, survey its structure and contrivance, and tell me, from your own feeling, if the idea of a contriver does not immediately flow in upon you with a force like that of sensation" (p. 28). But the feeling or sensitive perception is a too unsteady basis for the conclusion. Hume only needs to revert to his systematic analysis of human experience in the *Treatise*, although in that exoteric work he did not dare to draw the implied esoteric conclusion he gives in this posthumously published work: our ideas of experience are essentially wrong. "*All our ideas derived from the senses are confessedly false and illusive...* And as the ideas of *internal* sentiment, added to those of the *external* senses, compose the whole furniture of human understanding ... Our thought is fluctuating, uncertain, fleeting, successive and compounded" (p. 30). This is doctrine stemming straight from Spinoza, who qualifies empirical knowledge as imagination, which is according to him (but not yet the Hume of the *Treatise*) erroneous (2/17s) and '*falsitatis causa*' (the cause of error, 2/41).

From *Part V* onwards Hume starts hitting the nail on its head. Cleanthes reproaches Demea to be a prey of mysticism, of vagueness. Only Philo's head remains cool and reacts crystal-clear upon the logical defects in the complicated reasonings that it has to listen to. To the

objection that matter asks for a spiritual cause, Philo answers in a striking and unsurpassable passage :

If the material world rests upon a similar ideal world, this ideal world must rest upon some other, and so on without end. It were better, therefore, never to look beyond the present material world. By supposing it to contain the principle of its order within itself, we really assert it to be God; and the sooner we arrive at that Divine Being, so much the better. When you go one step beyond the mundane system, you only excite an inquisitive humour which it is impossible ever to satisfy (p. 34).

Against orthodox fake rationalism and mystical bigot belief Philo-Hume manifests himself as a full bloody naturalist, who in true and authentic rationalism can only accept what experience forces him to. Likewise he in the same breath resists sneeringly to the classical sophism of faculties and occult qualities: “Must we say, for instance, that bread nourishes by its nutritive faculty, and senna purges by its purgative” (p. 35).¹⁸¹ Going out beyond the world in order to explain it comes down to a nonsensical tautology. An explanation is only possible on the same level of relationships. And why would a supernatural origin have to be conceived of as one creative instance, where the world itself consists of so many different phenomena and apparently divergent systems? The universally acknowledged principle “like effects prove like causes’ and the analogy with buildings designed and composed by various professional people would make it more plausible to ascribe its cause to a plurality of agents: “why may not several deities combine in contriving and framing a World?”(p. 39). As we previously learned from Hume, this view of primitive mankind must historically have preceded monotheism.

47. Organic Nature

Dialogues comes to its highest point in *Part vi*, in which Philo turns the discussion on an other tack, since up till now it got stuck or at least remained unsatisfactory. In order to rescue the unity and autonomy of the world, he dismisses the causal reasoning of Cleanthes and has recourse to what we could call the biological model. Why should we not conceive the world as a partly visible animal? Why should we look for an external principle? Why do we refuse pantheism?

Now, if we survey the universe, so far as it falls under our knowledge, it bears a great resemblance to an animal or organized body, and seems actuated with a like principle of life and motion. A continual circulation of matter in it produces no disorder; a continual waste in every part is incessantly repaired; the closest sympathy is perceived throughout the entire system; and each part or member, in performing its proper offices, operates both to its own preservation and to that of the whole. *The world, therefore, I infer, is an animal*; and the Deity is the soul of the world, actuating it, and actuated by it (p. 42).

The die is cast. Hume identifies God and Nature, just like Spinoza did. That Spinoza, the philosophical superstar of modern times, also deeply influences Hume, becomes more than evident in a couple of crypto-references of this precious booklet, in which he unclothed himself for the eyes of posterity, not the eyes of his contemporary fellow citizens. Hume is not a clone of Spinoza. Whatever he takes over, he recreates with a personal imprint, in a different order, in a new style. At a first impression we are inclined to think that the two are

¹⁸¹ Cf. Locke’s critique of the putative faculties in my *Locke*, o.c. section 7. This critique is on its turn derived from Spinoza’s critique. Locke talked mockingly about terms like ‘digestive faculty’, ‘expulsive faculty’ and ‘elective faculty’.

only comparable. But further reflection and also subtle particles of a stylistic imitation will convince us that the affinity is not only apparent. Take the following illustration.

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| <p>You have too much learning, Cleanthes, to be at all surprised at this opinion which, you know, was maintained by <i>almost all the theists of antiquity</i>, and chiefly prevails in their discourses and reasonings. For though, sometimes, the <i>ancient philosophers</i> reason from final causes, as if they thought the world the workmanship of God, yet it appears rather their favourite notion to consider it as his body whose organization renders it subservient to him (p. 45).</p> | <p>For I maintain that God is the immanent cause, as the phrase is, of all things, and not the transitive cause. All things, I say, are in God and move in God, and this I affirm together with Paul and <i>probably together with all ancient philosophers (forte etiam cum omnibus antiquis philosophis)</i>, though expressed in a different way, and I would even venture to say, together with all the ancient Hebrews, as far as may be conjectured from certain traditions (Letter 73; p. 332).</p> |
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Too many words and associations are identical in this transcription for being only accidental. The world of the ancient philosophers is according to both philosophers a kind of an organism, a living and also self-conscious body, in which all parts are moving. It is the peculiarity of the geometrically obsessed Spinoza to articulate the features in separate propositions. Hume preferred a current exposition as follows.

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| <p>[According to the ancients] nothing is more repugnant to common experience than mind without body, a mere spiritual substance which fell not under their senses nor comprehension, and of which they had not observed one single instance throughout all nature. <i>Mind and body they knew because they felt both</i>; an order, arrangement, organization, or internal machinery, in both they likewise knew, after the same manner; and it could not but seem <i>reasonable to transfer this experience to the universe</i>, and to suppose the divine mind and body to be also <i>coeval</i> and to have both ... inseparable (p. 43).</p> | <p>We neither sense nor perceive any particular things save bodies and modes of thinking (E. ax. 2/5; p. 39). Thought (<i>cogitatio</i>) is an attribute of God, or, God is a thinking thing (ib. prop. 2/1). Extension (<i>extension</i>) is an attribute of God, or, God is an extended thing (ib. pr. 2/2). The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things (ib. 2/7). Thinking substance and extended substance are one and the same substance (2/7s).</p> |
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‘Substantia’ is Spinoza’s word for the universe or divine nature. Hume follows Spinoza in identifying divine mind and divine body, just like Spinoza did in his added note (scholium). Hume also accentuates with Spinoza Nature’s eternity:

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| <p>[Cleanthes:] Your theory seems to imply the eternity of the world... (p. 44).</p> | <p>God, i.e. all the attributes of God are eternal (E. 1/19).¹⁸²</p> |
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¹⁸² Cf. TTP 7 in fine, in which it is supposed that reason as well as Aristotle teach the ‘*aeternitas mundi*’.

48. *Permanent transformation of Nature.*

Just like an organic body is continuously changing, we attribute motion and change to the universe without normally making an external cause responsible for the mutations. Hume perfectly follows Spinoza in acknowledging the continuous transformation of nature.

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| <p>And though order were supposed inseparable from matter, and inherent in it, yet may matter be susceptible of many and great revolutions, through the endless periods of eternal duration. The <i>incessant changes to which every part of it is subject</i> seem to intimate some such <i>general transformations</i> ... passages from one state of order to another... What we see in the parts, we may infer in the whole; that is the method of reasoning on which you rest your whole theory. And were I obliged to defend any particular system of this nature, which I never willingly should do, I esteem no one more plausible than that which ascribes an eternal inherent principle of order in the world, though attended with great and <i>continual revolutions and alterations</i> (p. 46).</p> | <p>Nothing happens in nature which can be attributed to a defect of it; for nature is always the same, and its virtue and power of acting is everywhere one and the same, that is, the laws and rules of nature according to which all things are made and changed from one form into another (<i>ex unis formis in alias mutantur</i>) are everywhere and always the same (<i>Ethica</i> 3 pref.; p. 84). Whatever follows from an attribute of God, in so far as it is modified by such a <i>modification as exists of necessity</i> and infinitely through the same, must also exist of necessity and infinitely (prop. 1/23). In extension is the immediate infinite mode <i>motion and rest</i>. An example of the mediate infinite mode is the face of <i>the whole universe, which, although varying in infinite ways, yet remains always the same</i> (Letter 64; p. 299).</p> |
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The cause of the permanent transformation of the universe? This cannot be but its inherent and essential mobility, by which its parts work on each other. Another solution is excluded. An explanation by an imagined creator beyond the world is nothing but the shoving up of the problem. Hume, in fact, subscribes to Spinoza's ravishing explanation in *Letter* 32: "All bodies are surrounded by others and are *reciprocally* (vicissim) determined to exist and to act in a fixed and determinate way, the same ratio of motion to rest being preserved in them taken all together, that is, in the universe as a whole" (p. 194). The term 'creation' must be exchanged into 'internal generation'. And this is the same as 'continual revolutions and alterations'.

The transformations, however, are not wild and haphazard but regular. Both our philosophers stress that they are orderly and according to eternal laws. The worldly processes are surely not predictable on account of their infinite and unknowable roots, but this does not mean that they are due to chance. Also in this point Hume and Spinoza shake each others hand.

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| <p><i>Chance has no place</i>, on any hypothesis, sceptical or religious. Everything is surely governed by steady, inviolable laws. And were the inmost essence of things laid open to us, we should then discover a scene of which, at present, we can have no idea.</p> | <p>For if men clearly understood the whole order of Nature, they would find all things to be equally as necessary as are the things treated in mathematics. But because this is beyond the reach of human knowledge, certain things are judged by us as possible</p> |
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| Instead of admiring the order of natural beings, we should clearly see that it was absolutely impossible for them, in the smallest article, ever to admit of any other disposition (p. 46). | and not necessary (CM 2/9/2; p. 127). In the universe there exists <i>nothing contingent</i> , but all things are determined by the necessity of the divine nature to exist and operate in a certain way (E. 2/29; p. 25). |
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It is interesting that both, Spinoza and Hume, anticipate the well known *counterfactual supposition* of Laplace, according to which we would be able to predict the whole future of the world up to its smallest particularities and integrate them into our scientific models of explanation.

From the viewpoint of the historiography of English philosophy, which my project of 'Spinoza in English recycling' tries to innovate, it is breath taking to discover that Hume not only builds forth on Locke's Spinozistic empiricism, but also on the Spinozistic physics of Spinoza's virtual friend and follower Mandeville. Hume has read Mandeville with pleasure and due attention as it appears in the following juxtaposition of fragments.

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| For instance, what if I should <i>revive</i> the old <i>Epicurean hypothesis</i> ? This is commonly, and I believe justly, esteemed the most absurd system that has yet been proposed; yet I know not whether, with a few alterations, it might not be brought to bear a faint appearance of probability (p. 52) | Cleo. This is not more satisfactory or comprehensible, than the system of <i>Epicurus</i> , who derives every thing from wild Chance and an undesign'd struggle of senseless atoms... Yet this doctrine, which is <i>Spinosism in Epitome</i> , after having been neglected many years, <i>begins to prevail again</i> ... There is greater affinity between them than you imagine: they are of the same origin (<i>Fable 2</i> , p. 312). |
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The common reference to Epicurus cannot be a coincidence. It is allowed, therefore, to declare Cleomenes' conclusion that Horatio-Mandeville's worldview is '*Spinosism in Epitome*' also valid for Hume. Both would, of course, criticize the space for a sudden and seemingly uncaused declination of some atoms, which Epicurus creates by his '*clinamen*'. Nonetheless are they, together with Spinoza, fascinated by his explanation of natural phenomena through the motion and compositions of atoms in the depth.¹⁸³

49. Apotheosis of Hume's Spinozism

Gradually Hume climbs to the top of the mountain for preaching there to the world his sublime wisdom, like Jesus to his disciples. His message is catastrophic for all kinds of sophistry, theological, stoic or scholastic. The world is the product of a new god: motion.

Why may not motion have been propagated by impulse through all eternity, and the same stock of it, or nearly the same, be still upheld in the universe?¹⁸⁴ ... the fact is certain that matter is and always has been in continual agitation, as far as human experience or tradition reaches ... The continual motion of matter, therefore, in less than infinite transpositions, must produce this economy or order, and, by its

¹⁸³ Cr. chapter 5 ("Epicurus, Lucretius and Spinoza, or, ethics on the basis of physics") in my *Spinoza classicus*, O.C.

¹⁸⁴ This nearly (because it was formulated in a theological language) equals and is certainly a reference to the Cartesian-Spinozistic principle of conservation of energy: "God still preserves by his concurrence the same quantity of motion and rest that he originally gave to matter" (PPC 2/13; p. 63).

very nature, that order, when once established, supports itself for many ages if not to eternity (p. 53).
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A little bit further (p. 54) Hume speaks about the “*eternal revolutions of unguided matter*”. He does not focus on a point inside the indefinite order of time, but intends the order of time as a whole. This implies that he attributes autonomy to the moving matter and defines this as a cause of itself and its continuation, i.e. as the creator and conservator of the universe. Philo declares not without sufficient reason that he “*suggests a new hypothesis of cosmogony that is not absolutely absurd and improbable*” (p. 53), which is nothing less than a typical example of English – Scotch in this case - ‘understatement’.

Cleantes seems to be convinced by Philo. In *Part IX* he apparently is won over to the idea that it is absurd to search a first cause of the world process.

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| <p><i>Why may not the material universe be the necessarily existent Being? ...</i></p> <p>Add to this that in tracing an eternal succession of objects it seems absurd to inquire for a general cause or first author (p. 59).</p> | <p>Every particular thing, or whatever thing that is finite and has a determinate existence, cannot exist nor be determined for action unless it is determined for action and existence by another cause which is also finite and has a determinate existence; and again, this cause also cannot exist nor be determined for action unless it be determined for existence and action by another cause which also is finite and has a determinate existence; <i>and so on to infinity</i> (Ethica 2/28; p. 24).</p> |
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Proposition 1/28 is one of the most typical, at least also a very central proposition, of the first part of the *Ethica*. Hume had appropriated it from the time he first read the *Ethica* but dared not come out with this devilish ‘atheism’. He fully joins Spinoza in judging the search for a first cause of the always moving and alternating world as a logical absurdity. ‘*Deus sive natura*’, yes, why not? The question mark behind the sentence starting with ‘why may not the material universe...’ can only be meant as rhetorical.

I, personally, cannot understand why other scholars did not already for centuries remark and seal Hume’s authentic Spinozism! Why are they so blind to oppose the insular to the continental scientist?

On the same page we find another interesting detail, which just because it is such a minute detail, betrays Hume’s source.

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| <p>Did I show you the particular causes of each individual in a collection of <u>twenty</u> particles of matter, I should think it very unreasonable should you afterwards ask me</p> | <p>E.g. if in the nature of things <u>twenty</u> men were to exist ... it would not be enough when giving a reason why twenty men existed, to show the cause of human nature</p> |
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¹⁸⁵ Cf. Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 4.10.10, in which he identifies God with the eternal cogitative matter or at least claims cautiously that this is a possibility: “Matter, then, by its own strength, cannot produce in itself so much as motion; the motion it has must also be from eternity or else be produced and added to matter by some being more powerful than matter... But let us suppose motion eternal too...” On account of this chapter Locke was immediately accused by William Carroll of being a Spinozist in disguise. See my *John Locke* o.c. section 29.

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| what was the cause of the whole twenty (p. 59). | in general, but it would be necessary also to show the cause why not more or less than twenty existed ... since the true definition of man does not involve the number twenty”(E. 2/8s; p. 8). |
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The context and the intention of both passages is slightly different, but the same detail of ‘20’ clearly betrays where Abraham took the mustard from. Hume is not a parasite on Spinoza’s wisdom, but he explores, internalizes and recreates it quite originally in his own work, posthumous in this case, but also earlier in his veiled and immunized publications.

Part IX ought to become a classical text on university programs, side by side to the *Ethica*. On the next page it is Spinoza’s fully fledged determinism, that is cryptically on the agenda and ... inculcated. Talking with an illustration about the unassailability of mathematics, Philo extends its necessity to the real world, or better, declares that mathematical necessity is, in fact, the expression of fundamental reality. What follows is again one of his most beautiful passages, which again can be easily related to places in Spinoza’s text.

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| To the superficial observer so <i>wonderful a regularity</i> may be admired as the effect either of chance or design, but a skilful algebraist immediately concludes it to be the <i>work of necessity</i> , and demonstrates that it must for ever result from the nature of these numbers. Is it not probable, I ask, that the <i>whole economy of the universe is conducted by a like necessity</i> , though no human algebra can furnish a key which solves the <i>difficulty</i> ? And instead of admiring the order of natural beings, may it not happen that, <i>could</i> we penetrate into the intimate nature of bodies, we should clearly see why it was absolutely impossible they could ever admit of any other disposition? (p. 60). | In the universe there exists nothing contingent, but all things are determined by the <i>necessity of divine nature</i> to exist and operate in a certain way (E. 1/29; p. 25). Things <i>could</i> not have been produced by God in any other way or order than that in which they were produced (ib. 1/33; p. 27). For if men clearly understood the whole order of Nature, they would find all things to be equally as necessary as are the things treated in mathematics (CM 2/9/2; p. 127). ¹⁸⁶ |
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The difficulty in question (italicized in the quote) was broached by Cleanthes and concerned the way how each part of the universe convenes with the whole. Given our ignorance of the infinite causes of a particular phenomenon we can never give an adequate explanation. The same question (of Oldenburg and behind him Locke) was presented to Spinoza, who in Letter 32 answered: “As to knowing the actual manner of this coherence and the agreement of each part with the whole, I made it clear in my previous letter that this is beyond my knowledge” (p. 192).¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ See also the quotes in section 11.

¹⁸⁷ See my *John Locke*, o.c. sections 4 & 5.

So much is evident, that Hume puts himself in the *Dialogues* for the full 100% in Spinoza's spur, as developed in *Ethica*, part 1.

50. Concluding remarks and complaints

Whoever has seriously and integrally studied the philosophical writings of Hume, the whole *Treatise*, both *Enquiries*, all the *Essays* and especially the *Dialogues*, and did it with knowledge of Spinoza's works on the background in his head, cannot be but much annoyed by the secondary literature. This literature is immense but highly disappointing in all respects. The historically uninformed scholar may consult it with due academic attention and dedication as much as he wishes until being struck by head-ache, the required light will never break through over the real intention of Hume, because the key to Hume's terminology fails in nearly all books and articles on Hume.¹⁸⁸ Take for instance the chapter "On God and Natural Order" of Gaskin's much applauded book *Hume's Philosophy of Religion*.¹⁸⁹ One only finds a total absence of the least suspect of Hume's identification of God with nature, whereas this can hardly be missed by the serious student of *Dialogues*. I ask the unprejudiced but persevering and searching reader whether he is not at a loss, mislead and thoroughly confused with the following fragment.

From Hume's repeated affirmations of a deity, together with Philo's assent to a very restricted sense of the proposition 'there is a god', I have concluded that Hume regards belief in a god as reasonable rather than unreasonable and that he thinks the reasonableness is recognised by most men when they survey the order in nature (*something* of the design argument remains). But this reasonable belief amounts to so very little that the theist and the atheist can agree about it. The belief is without religious significance and leaves Hume free (a) to adopt an attitude of mitigated scepticism to all theological arguments because they are beyond our understanding; (b) to attribute belief in a particular revelation to an irrational faith which he sarcastically refers to a miracle, and (c) to criticise and condemn religions 'as it has commonly been found in the world'. It is failure to notice the genuineness of Hume's rational assent to the existence of some sort of god, which has made it appear as if his assent is insincere, or inconsistent with his critique of religion, or the expression of a natural belief. It is none of these (p. 130).

Most hurting is perhaps that Gaskin too much deviates from Hume's well chosen terminology, founded on the Spinozistic, Lockean and his own distinction between three kinds of knowledge. It is out of order that Hume could believe either in a natural god or even in god as nature. Belief is essentially a lowly assessed and valued kind of perception, which he sharply distinguishes from the certainties we acquire by the relation of ideas and what we may deduce from them.¹⁹⁰ Our knowledge of 'divine nature' belongs to the realm of mathematics (p. 60), just like before Hume Spinoza considered it part of the 'mathesis'. And is it not a complete misunderstanding of the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* and *Dialogues* alike, to maintain that there remains 'something' of the design argument after Hume's devastating critique? Speaking in this connection about a 'reasonable belief' is totally misplaced; Hume does not cherish the least belief in a divine engineer or provider. This idea is for him nonsensical. It is, of course, right to declare that Hume has a negative attitude against every dogmatic theological argumentation, that he writes sarcastically about the naïve belief in a divine Revelation and that he generally esteems forms of popular religion as being only primitive customs. But how is Gaskin entitled to attribute to Hume's

¹⁸⁸ I mentioned the scarce exceptions in my first section.

¹⁸⁹ O.c. p. 120-131.

¹⁹⁰ See my section 10 above.

representation 'some sort of god', without informing the reader that this god is the universe? Above all Gaskin's pseudo-paraphrase of Hume's position fails by neglect of essential features of Hume's argument. Instead of them the reader's brain is uselessly fatigued by vague categories from a field very different from Hume's own territory. The idea that the Dutch philosopher, who spelled whole France and part of England, might have played a role in Hume's mind, does not even come up in Gaskin's mind. The situation seems not to have changed. The *Cambridge Companion to Hume* does not know Spinoza either.¹⁹¹

But on the other hand Hume is also hardly recognizable where a scarce Spinoza-scholar, preferable from the Anglo-Saxon world who supposedly was academically educated with Hume, ventures a comparison of Hume with Spinoza. This is for instance the case with Michael Della Rocca in his recent monography *Spinoza*.¹⁹² I quoted a long fragment from this book in my first section and hope that my reader is not disillusioned by my refutation of his idiosyncratic and Leibnitian colouring of his biased Spinoza. Also Jonathan Israel does not see a positive connection between Spinoza's radicalism and what he calls the 'moderate Enlightenment' of David Hume. His very erudite, impressing and extremely valuable volumes about the revolution unchained by Spinoza in our Western philosophy don't appoint in my view to Hume the place that he merits more than anyone else on account of his huge influence on contemporary philosophy.¹⁹³

Happily there exist comforting exceptions. I want to finish my essay with the statement of an eminent Spinoza scholar, Emanuela Scribano, which totally agrees with conclusions of the above quoted renowned Hume scholar, Annette Baier.¹⁹⁴ I draw the following passage from her latest book, *Guida alla lettura dell'Ethica di Spinoza*.¹⁹⁵ I translate her Italian as follows:

The debt of British empiricism to the *Ethica* is apart from the case of Locke also evident in David Hume's text. Hume did not talk much about Spinoza and when he did so, he joined the generally spread decrying. However, he actually certainly incorporated doctrines neglected by others, mislead as they were by the strong impact of metaphysics. In the *Ethica* Hume did not look for God or the infinite nature, fields about which the ratio could not acquire certainty,¹⁹⁶ but found there the principles, which are of great importance for his theory of the imagination, on which according to the Scotch philosopher human knowledge rests... In the second part of the *Ethica* Spinoza had impeded much space to the associative mechanisms, which enable the imagination to construe a regular universe, in which people, without profiting from a truth discovered by reason, nonetheless succeed to live and orientate themselves on the basis of a broadly shared and stable set of beliefs. In the wake of this Spinozistic analysis of the imagination Hume makes in his *Treatise of Human Nature* the association of

¹⁹¹ See my remark in section 1 and note 9.

¹⁹² London: routledge 2008.

¹⁹³ See his *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1550-1750* (Oxford U.P. 2001) and *Enlightenment Contested. Philosophy, Modernity, and the emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (Oxford U.P. 2006). I often discussed privately with Jonathan Israel this point of difference, also concerning John Locke, who's position is in my view likewise misunderstood by him. His defence to my critique is in general, that he does not deny the value of my findings about Locke and Hume as philosophers, but that he judges as a historian and sociologue about Locke and Hume *as they were perceived in their time and as they worked on their posterity*, especially in England and the USA. He is focused on the *conservative* role they actually played, not in the least also while they succeeded in effectively hiding the radical elements they borrowed from Spinoza.

¹⁹⁴ See my section 13.

¹⁹⁵ Roma 2008.

¹⁹⁶ We saw in the last section that this part of Scribano's statement cannot stand scrutiny.

ideas the foundation of his argumentation, in particular his highly fruitful conclusion, which binds the occurrence we call cause to the fact we call effect.

Subsequently Spinoza's presence is visible in the Humean analysis of the passions and in his book on morals. He learns that the distinction between good and evil is not the work of the reason, but of the sentiment. He further makes use of Spinoza's thesis, according to which the reason, as an organ of truth and falsity, is inactive and incapable to influence the passions as well as to produce moral distinctions. Hume, moreover, received with both hands every Spinozistic analysis of the socializing value of some passions, like sympathy or, in Spinoza's words, the imitation of affects, which constitutes according to Spinoza an important social cement for people living in the atmosphere of imagination, and which in Hume plays a central role in the explanation of pleasure and displeasure, provoked by happy or unhappy persons with whom they are not related by one or another interest, a pleasure and displeasure, which just on account of this lies at the basis of moral sense.¹⁹⁷

The above expert comparison between our two heroes has a great meaning for the writer of this essay, who tried already for a quarter of a century in vain to bring about a change in the general assessment of Hume's position in the history of philosophy. The traditional view is so deeply entrenched in the dominating philosophy that it appeared up till now impossible to break in the bulwark. And as I see it the reason cannot be another than the two centuries old pernicious prejudice that English empiricism is the 90 degrees opposite of the continental rationalism. One need not to look around on the other side of the channel for eventual roots. Locke and Hume would have virgin-like born from Zeus' head and have started on their own powers in the fruitful English environment a completely new development in Western philosophy. No idea came up, that they might be suppositious children of another divine and overwhelming power: Spinoza. Their own lifelong continued tricky defence mechanisms mislead their contemporary and later generations.

But it is not yet too late for the acknowledgement of his filiation from Spinoza. The new pedigree will make him only greater and give more splendour to his name.

¹⁹⁷ The Italian of this revolutionary adaptation of the traditional view on Hume in Klever's and Baier's spur sounds: "Il debito dell'empirismo britannico nei confronti dell'*Etica* è evidente anche in David Hume, che di Spinoza parlò poco e, quando lo fece, si allineò alla generale esecrazione, ma che ebbe ben presenti dottrine che altri avevano trascurato, abbagliati dal forte imparto della sua metafisica. Hume nell'*Etica* non andò cercare né Dion è la natura infinita, tutti temi sui quali la ragione non può pronunciarsi, ma vi trovò spunti di grande interesse per la teoria dell'immaginazione, sulla quale, secondo il filosofo scozzese, si basa tutta la conoscenza umana. ... Nella parte seconda dell'*Etica* Spinoza aveva dedicato uno spazio assai ampio ai meccanismi associative che permettono all'immaginazione di costruire un universo regolato, nel quale gli uomini che non utilizzano la verità scoperta dalla ragione riescono nondimeno a vivere e a orientarsi seguendo credenze e pregiudizialmente condivisi e stabili, tanto da costituire sistemi di credenze e regole di vita. Nel *Trattato sulla natura umana* (1739-1740) Hume, seguendo le tracce dell'analisi spinoziana dell'immaginazione, pone l'associazione di idee alla base dell'inferenza, e, in particolare, della più feconda di tutte, quella che lega l'evento che chiamiamo causa all'evento che chiamiamo effetto.

La presenza di Spinoza è poi riconoscibile nell'analisi humeana delle passioni e della morale. La distinzione tra il bene e il male non è opera della ragione, ma del sentimento, dirà Hume, utilizzando anche la tesi spinoziana secondo la quale la ragione, in quanto organo del vero e del falso, è inattiva e incapace sia di agire sulle passioni sia di produrre distinzioni morali. Hume attingeva poi a piene mani alle analisi spinoziane sul valore socializzante di alcune passioni, come la simpatia, ovvero, in termini spinoziani, l'imitazione degli affetti, che costituisce in Spinoza un importante cemento sociale per gli uomini che si affidano al sapere immaginativo, e che, in Hume, svolge un ruolo centrale per spiegare il piacere o il dispiacere provocati dalla felicità o dall'infelicità di persone verso le quali non siamo legati da alcun interesse, un piacere e un dispiacere disinteressati che, proprio per questo, sono alla base del senso morale (p. 175-176).