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The reluctant revolutionary: An essay on David Hume's account of necessary connection

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Abstract: The Reluctant Revolutionary: an essay on David Hume's account of necessary connection.

David Hume's contributions to Philosophy, especially that of causality and necessary connection, have long been a source of debate, and unfortunately, confusion. My essay has the limited objective of attempting to dissipate some of the perplexities that surround Hume's influential views on necessary connection or power.

Through close critical analyses of Hume's texts I have attempted to develop a new interpretative framework that makes Hume's arguments and positions more accessible, if not more plausible. More positively, The Reluctant Revolutionary is an attempt to defend what may be called a subjectivist interpretation of Hume's views on necessary connection. My central thesis is the suggestion that Hume identifies necessary connection or power with a specific psychological disposition of the mind - as he puts it in the Treatise: necessary connection 'is a determination of the mind to carry our thoughts from one object to another'. (T 165)

But why would Hume subscribe to this radical thesis, one may wonder? A large part of my discussion is an attempt to answer this vital question. The book consists of four components. In Chapter One

i) I begin with the argument that Hume views his discussion of necessary connection as central to the Treatise - if not as its centerpiece, and

ii) then go on to try to place this discussion in its immediate philosophical context which is the discussion on causality.

Equipped with this preliminary and tentative background framework to Hume's account of necessary connection, in Chapter Two I struggle with the question, 'What precisely is Hume's view of necessary connection?' In the process I challenge some entrenched and influential interpretations of his position on the issue, especially that 'recently' endorsed by Barry Stroud in his Hume. As it turns out, it seems that Hume both tells us, and does not tell us what necessary connection is!! For it seems that Hume goes as far as to boldly identify necessary connection or power with a particular psychological disposition, and then refrains from saying anything specific about this disposition. I have something to say about this apparent lacuna towards the end of this chapter.

After further deliberations on these two issues, in Chapter Three I proceed to outline, and critically evaluate the immediate arguments relied on by Hume to
establish his view of necessary connection. For the most part, these do not strike me as convincing arguments. Broadly speaking, Hume relies on two types of arguments for his radical thesis, one on the search for the source of the idea of necessary connection, and the other on a semantic assessment of his rivals' metaphysical theories. After presenting these major arguments, I try to show why they are unsatisfactory.

Finally, in Chapter Four I broaden my analysis of Hume's view of necessary connection, and try to develop an account of Hume's conception of the problem that motivates his radical view of necessary connection. As I try to point out, Hume is driven by an irrepressible urge for clarity and rigour in metaphysics - an urge that manifests itself, as I attempt to show, both in the radical nature of Hume's proposals, and in his depiction of the problem of necessary connection. For Hume depicts the problem of necessary connection as a dilemma, according to which metaphysicians either

a) concede that the term 'necessary connection' is meaningless (by virtue of the non-existence of a requisite impression)

b) or accept that this term actually refers to a particular subjective psychological disposition, and not, for instance, to some external phenomenon.

This chapter closes with a consideration of this dilemma, and its role in Hume's postulation of a radical view of necessary connection.
I am at present castrating my work, that is, cutting off its nobler parts; that is, endeavouring it shall give as little offence as possible ... This is a piece of cowardice, for which I blame myself, though I believe none of my friends will blame me.

(David Hume to Henry Home: 2 December 1737)

My principles are...so remote from all the vulgar sentiments on the subject, that were they to take place, they would produce almost a total alteration in philosophy: and you know, revolutions of this kind are not easily brought about.

(David Hume to Henry Home: 13 February 1739)
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ABBREVIATIONS

A  An Abstract of a Book lately Published, entitled, A Treatise of Human Nature (David Hume)

E  An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (David Hume)

G  The Letters of David Hume (ed) JYT Greig

M  The Life of David Hume (Ernest Mossner)

S  The Philosophy of David Hume (Norman Kemp Smith)

T  A Treatise of Human Nature (David Hume)
CHAPTER ONE

On the significance of Hume's account of necessary connection

1. David Hume bequeathed an estate that has both exasperated and enchanted the philosophical community. Here are two representative assessments of his contributions. Selby-Bigge, perhaps Hume's most celebrated editor, is forthright:

   He applies the same principles to such a great variety of subjects that it is not surprising that many verbal, and some real inconsistencies can be found in his statements. He is ambitious rather that shy of saying the same thing in different ways, and at the same time he is often slovenly and indifferent about his words and formulae. This makes it easy to find all philosophies in Hume, or by setting up one statement against another, none at all. (Selby-Bigge 1888, vii)

And in a recent, more amiable response, John Bricke suggests that

   Hume makes very good philosophical company: he is sophisticated, inventive, surprisingly systematic, profound. He is extraordinarily stimulating, if also a source of very great perplexity. (Bricke 1980, 1)

In this essay I propose to explore one - arguably the most intricate and significant - of Hume's philosophical bequests: namely, his account of necessary connection.

2. Through a close analysis of Hume's texts, I shall attempt to satisfy three overall objectives in this essay. After a preliminary and tentative account of Hume's conception of the problem of necessary connection,
a) I intend to determine, with as much precision as I can muster, Hume's views on necessary connection.

b) Thereafter, I shall fully articulate, and critically evaluate, the arguments relied on by Hume for his views on necessary connection.

c) Finally, returning to my point of departure, I shall broaden the scope of this analysis through an investigation of Hume's conception of the problem of necessary connection - and in the process provide an explanation for the adoption of a radical thesis on necessary connection that Hume himself acknowledged was little likely to endear him to the philosophical community.

But why engage in a philosophical investigation of Hume's account of necessary connection? What follows in this chapter is an attempt to answer this important question. Through a brief account of the reception accorded the Treatise by the philosophical community, and a consideration of Hume's assessment of the situation, I want to argue that an adequate understanding of the overall thrust of the Treatise must draw on an understanding of Hume's views on necessary connection. With this external justification for my enquiry behind me, in section two I shall both provide a more philosophical, or internal justification for this essay, and indicate how my investigation will proceed.

Section one: The centrepiece of the Treatise.

3. Hume is characteristically candid in the Abstract: the problem of necessary connection is intractable, and demands a solution that is 'very new and extraordinary'. (A 657) But history has shown that the reception of new and extraordinary solutions to philosophical problems, however intractable, is far from smooth! So it comes as no surprise to find that Hume concludes his Treatise analysis of necessary connection on a sober note:

I am sensible, that of all the paradoxes, which I have had, or shall hereafter have occasion to advance in the course of this treatise, the present one is the most violent, and that 'tis merely by dint of solid proof and reasoning I can ever hope it will have admission, and overcome the inveterate prejudices of mankind. (T 166)
Unfortunately, Hume's worst fears were soon realized. Within months of its publication, the harsh notices and reviews of the *Treatise* that surfaced in the learned journals, culminating in the scathing forty-six page review in the prestigious *History of the Works of the Learned*, confirmed Hume's suspicions of the 'inveterate prejudices of mankind'. Well, confirmed at least his suspicions of the 'partiality and prejudice' of 'the Few' that had reviewed the *Treatise*. (A 644) Hume's 'very new and extraordinary' solutions were not going down very well with the philosophical community.

4. The first review of the *Treatise* - perhaps 'note' is more appropriate - if not determining the tune, certainly set the tone for the reviews that were to follow. Published in the Leipzig journal, *Neuen Zeitungen von gelehrten Sachen*, this review appeared four months after the publication of the *Treatise*, on the 28 May 1739. Consisting of a mere three sentences, it reads as follows:

> A new free-thinker has published an exhaustive *Treatise of Human Nature*, 2 volumes, octavo. In it he attempts to introduce the correct method of philosophising into moral matters, examining and explaining, first of all, the characteristics of the human understanding, and then the effects. The author's evil intentions are sufficiently betrayed in the sub-title of the work, taken from Tacitus: *Rara temporum felicitas, ubi sentire, quae velis; & quae sentias, dicere, licet.* (In M 120)

Displaying a greater sensitivity to Hume's 'evil intentions' than to the details of the *Treatise*, this notice reveals far more about the reviewer's prejudices than Hume's text! With jaundiced reactions like this, who would not dismally draw attention to the 'partiality and prejudice' that corrupted the critics? (A 644)

5. The response accorded the *Treatise* by the philosophical community distressed Hume.¹ For it meant that the revolutionary project of the *Treatise*, which was to introduce 'the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects' (T xi), faced an uncertain, if not downright bleak future. Days after the publication of the *Treatise*, in a letter to a friend, Hume anxiously confided - not without a hint of keen anticipation - that

> [m]y principles are...so remote from all the vulgar sentiments on the subject, that were they to take place, they would produce almost a total alteration in philosophy: and you know,
revolutions of this kind are not easily brought about. (G 26)

Now that the reviews were out, and the sentiments of the philosophical community known, Hume had to concede that his optimism had been misplaced. Far from generating a philosophical revolution, the Treatise, given its initial hostile reception by its professional reviewers, was likely to be stifled by this community of readers, and not reach its intended audience, the public at large. Which perhaps explains Hume's later acidic comment, made towards the end of his life, that no

literary attempt was more unfortunate that my Treatise of human [sic] Nature. It fell dead-born from the Press; without reaching such distinction as even to excite a Murmur among the Zealots. (G 2)

But why did the Treatise not survive the confines of the press, and presumably, the world of the critics? Why did it elicit such an immediate negative response that it did not even make it through, as Hume puts it, to the world of the Zealots, let alone the world of the general populace? Was it, as is suggested above, Hume's radical departure from the status quo, and the resultant conflict with the established (prejudicial) attitudes of his critics, that induced the unfavourable reception of the Treatise? Or was the hostility due to the paradoxical nature of the theses advanced by Hume's text? Or were the arguments of the Treatise at fault - perhaps through lack of logical rigour? Was it perhaps a combination of these, and other factors? Whatever the true explanation for the hostile response accorded the Treatise, there is a good deal to be said for a consideration of Hume's assessment of the situation. For one thing, and perhaps most important in this context, the consideration of Hume's diagnosis of the hostile reception of the Treatise is fruitful, in that it yields an invaluable insight into Hume's views on the significance of his account of necessary connection. Without further ado, let us turn to this issue.

6. As the Abstract is one of the clearest statements of Hume's views on the reasons for the hostile reception of the Treatise, I shall confine my attention to this document in my attempt to determine Hume's diagnosis of 'the shortcomings' of the Treatise. The Abstract, a sixpenny thirty-two page pamphlet, was intended as a counter to the scathing reviews of the Treatise, and was an attempt to make the Treatise's views accessible to as wide an audience as possible. However, before we consider its contents, let me say something on its authorship, about which there is some debate.
7. Hume hardly refers to the anonymous text in his correspondence, and to my knowledge, never refers to it as his own in his works. Furthermore, when he does refer to the Abstract, as in an important letter to Francis Hutcheson, Professor at Glasgow University, Hume does not do so in a way that establishes beyond doubt that he is its author. Consider this extract from a letter written on 4 March 1740, on the Abstract and a copy of Hume's book sent to Adam Smith, at the time a senior student of Hutcheson's. It is perhaps the best piece of evidence we have to help determine the authorship of the Abstract:

My Bookseller has sent to Mr Smith a Copy of my Book, which I hope he has receiv'd, as well as your Letter. I have not yet heard what he has done with the Abstract. Perhaps you have. I have got it printed in London; but not in the Works of the Learned, there having been an Article with regard to my Book, somewhat abusive, printed in that Work, before I sent up the Abstract. (G 37/8)

Clearly, we cannot conclude, merely on the basis of this extract, that Hume is the author of the Abstract. At best, we can infer that Hume appears to approve of its pending dissemination - otherwise, why oversee its printing in London? Greig seems to suggest that Adam Smith wrote the Abstract, or at least had a major role in its formation:

It was Hutcheson's practice to set his students to make abstracts of new philosophical works as they appeared. It would seem that in 1739 he set Smith to work at the Treatise, Books I and II, and that the abstract which Smith made pleased Hutcheson so well that he sent it on to Hume, and pleased Hume so well that he had it printed in London and sent Smith a presentation copy of the book. (G 37)

However, PH Nidditch has pointed out that an extant copy of the Abstract contains 'certain manuscript amendments; this copy is bound in at the back of the Hume copy of Volume III of the Treatise in the British (Museum) Library'. (T 667) As these amendments appear to be in Hume's hand, this suggests that Hume did have a say in the compilation of the Abstract, even if it does not show that Hume was its only author. Nevertheless, even if Hume is not the Abstract's only author, the fact that Hume made the effort to have it published, at least suggests that he endorsed its contents. For this
reason, I intend to regard the Abstract as Hume's i.e. as a statement that Hume endorses, if not as a statement that Hume sired.

8. With this important digression behind us, let us return to Hume's diagnosis of the hostile reception of the Treatise, through the consideration of the Abstract. The aim of the Abstract is 'only to encrease [the Treatise's] auditory, by removing some difficulties, which have kept many from apprehending [its] meaning'. (A 644, my inserts) This suggests that Hume attributes at least part of the negative reception of the Treatise to his critics' failure to understand the work - a lack of understanding, in part due to certain 'difficulties' encountered by these critics. But what precisely are these 'difficulties' that Hume proposes to deal with, in order to render the Treatise 'more intelligible to ordinary capacities'? (A 643) Hume tells us in the preface of the Abstract. According to him, the 'failure' of the Treatise can be ascribed to two principal shortcomings:

a) 'the abstractedness of the argument' in the Treatise,
b) the 'partiality and prejudice' of the few learned critics who have passed judgement on the views expressed in the Treatise.

Now as he sees it, no amount of tinkering with the expression of his Treatise views is likely to alter his critics' entrenched dispositions. For unfortunately, 'they resolve not to relinquish' their own systems. (A 644) Conceding that he can do nothing about the 'partiality and prejudice' of the few learned critics who have already read the Treatise, Hume turns to the 'shortcoming' that he thinks is amenable to his treatment: namely, the problem of 'the abstractedness of the argument' of the Treatise. And the way in which he proposes to overcome this alleged shortcoming of the Treatise proves instructive here. In order to counter the charge that the overall discussion of the Treatise is 'obscure and difficult', (A 643), Hume chooses to focus on one of its components, and to explain it further. Of all the arguments in the Treatise, Hume deliberately selects only one to elaborate on in the Abstract: 'I have chosen one simple argument, which I have carefully traced from the beginning to the end'. (A 644, my emphasis) As it turns out, this is his argument on necessary connection. So it seems that, at least when the Abstract was written, Hume attributes the charge of abstractedness, and thus the hostile response to the Treatise, in large part, to the inability of his critics to understand his analysis of necessary connection. By clarifying this component of the discussion, intimates Hume, one ought to dissipate the aura of abstractedness that allegedly surrounds the Treatise, thereby preempting the hostility that
readers might display to the Treatise. All of which suggests, if I am correct here, that Hume regards his discussion on necessary connection as the centrepiece of the Treatise. The following seems to confirm this suggestion of mine.

9. Consider the titles of the Abstract. The Daily Advertiser of 11 March 1740 originally announced the anonymous pamphlet as An Abstract of a late Philosophical Performance, entitled A Treatise of Human Nature, &c. Wherein the chief Argument and Design of that Book, which has met with such Opposition, and been represented in so terrifying a Light, is further illustrated and explain’d. (M 124/5) This colourful title not only shows that its author was acutely aware of the Treatise’s hostile reception - cf. the phrase 'which has met with such Opposition, and been represented in so terrifying a Light' - but also indicates that the Abstract is at least an attempt to abridge the central argument of the Treatise. Not any argument, but the central, or 'the chief Argument' of the book. So this original title clearly suggests that one argument in the Treatise has priority over the others. This view is borne out by a consideration of the later, less emotive title. For when the Abstract was reprinted, it had a new title. The expressions referring to the hostile reception of the Treatise had been removed, leaving a title that again emphasized that the Abstract was an account of the central component of that book's overall argument. The later rendition of the title reads as follows:

AN ABSTRACT of A BOOK lately PUBLISHED, entitled a TREATISE of Human Nature, &c. wherein The CHIEF ARGUMENT of that BOOK is further illustrated and explained. (T 640)

But if Hume is suggesting, through these titles, that there is such a thing as 'the Chief Argument' in the Treatise, and if the argument he considers in the Abstract is the argument on necessary connection, it follows that Hume views his discussion on necessary connection as the most important component of his discussion in the Treatise. So a consideration of both the content of the Abstract and its titles, strongly suggests, as I have attempted to show above, that Hume views his account of necessary connection as the foundation of the general thrust of the Treatise. And in that case, any attempt to acquire an adequate understanding of the overall positions advanced in the Treatise ought to build on an understanding of Hume's views on necessary connection. In short, in order to understand the Treatise, one must at least understand Hume's account of necessary
connection.

10. To a large extent, it is this fundamental role of Hume's discussion of necessary connection in the Treatise that warrants, in my view, a close analysis of the issue. But are there any other reasons for this investigation - any philosophical, or internal reasons for an analysis of Hume's views on necessary connection? If so, how ought the investigation proceed? I would now like to say something on these two issues.

Section two: On the philosophical significance of Hume's account of necessary connection.

11. As with other issues in philosophy, the problem of necessary connection is enmeshed with a cluster of diverse philosophical issues. So Hume's account of necessary connection is not, and cannot be viewed as an isolated contribution to some self-contained philosophical problem. Thus one of the tasks of my analysis will be to place Hume's views of necessary connection in some broader framework - a task I shall tackle towards the end of the essay. Nevertheless, at this early stage it is possible, and in my opinion advisable to provide some preliminary and tentative indication of the major constituents of this background framework. One way to do this is to articulate the context for Hume's analysis of necessary connection. The tentative specification of this context, as I see it, will provide us with a useful preliminary background framework within which to intelligibly place Hume's account of necessary connection. Furthermore, and equally important, the articulation of this background, as I hope to show below, will generate a few invaluable markers for the analysis that is to follow in this essay. Equipped with some tentative insights into these elements of the environment that sustains the problem, we shall be in the position to understand why my subsequent analysis of Hume's account of necessary connection proceeds as it does.

12. Fairly early in the Treatise, Hume suggests that contiguity and succession characterize causal contexts. In his words, as a result of his investigations, he has 'discover'd or suppos'd the two relations of contiguity and succession to be essential to causes and effects'. (T 76) But this is not to say that these two features exhaustively characterize causal contexts, continues Hume. As he forcefully puts it,

    Shall we then rest contented with these two relations of contiguity and succession, as affording a compleat idea of
causation? By no means. An object may be contiguous and prior to another, without being consider'd as its cause. (T 77)

For objects, or events, to use a contemporary word, can be contiguous and succeed one another, without being causally related. That is, two events, call them events A and B, can be contiguous, with event A preceding event B, suggests Hume, without A being the cause of B. For instance, I might jump from a rock off Cape Agulhas only moments before a large wave strikes that rock, yet we would not claim that my (prior) jump caused the (subsequent) wave to strike the rock. But if contiguity and succession do not exhaustively characterize causal contexts, what more is required?

13. The missing ingredient, reports Hume, is necessary connection. To claim that two events are causally related, is to claim not only that the events are contiguous and succeed each other, but also to ascribe necessity to the causal context. And of these three essential components of a causal context, necessary connection is viewed as the most important:

An object may be contiguous and prior to another, without being consider'd as its cause. There is a NECESSARY CONNEXION to be taken into consideration; and that relation is of much greater importance, than any of the other two above-mentioned. (T 77)

So the notion of causality, as Hume sees it, encompasses the notion of necessary connection. As a result, any attempt at a complete elucidation of the term 'cause' - in order to discover what a cause is - must include an elucidation of the term 'necessary connection'. Unfortunately, as Hume attempts to demonstrate in the Treatise, the need for this additional component raises a number of problems for attempts to elucidate the term 'cause', and hence for attempts to learn about causality itself. To be more specific: an adequate elucidation of the term 'cause', for Hume, amongst other things, calls for the identification of an impression that he alleges is associated with the term 'necessary connection'. This requirement, argues Hume - or so it seems - proves highly problematic, in that it gives rise to a dilemma. Now precisely what is this (alleged) dilemma, and why does Hume view the situation in such stark terms?

14. In the opening section of the Treatise, as well as the second section of the Enquiry, Hume argues for a contingent thesis on the relationship between ideas and impressions. The Treatise expresses this as the thesis
that 'all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent'. (T 4) Referring to this as 'the principle of the priority of impressions to ideas' (T 6), Hume proposes to use the principle in his attempt to satisfy a major objective of the Treatise - which, according to its subtitle, is 'to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects'. (T xi) As it turns out, this principle, or general maxim, as he later calls it in the Enquiry, functions as a semantic principle, by means of which one can determine whether a theory is intelligible or not. To be more accurate, as Hume sees it, his priority principle can be used to decide on the meaningfulness or significance of the terms of a theory:

Here, therefore, is a proposition, which not only seems, in itself, simple and intelligible, but, if a proper use were made of it, might render every dispute equally intelligible, and banish all that jargon, which has so long taken possession of metaphysical reasonings, and drawn disgrace upon them. All ideas, especially abstract ones, are naturally faint and obscure: The mind has but a slender hold of them: They are apt to be confounded with other resembling ideas; and when we have often employed any term, though without a distinct meaning, we are apt to imagine it has a determinate idea, annexed to it. On the contrary, all impressions, that is, all sensations, either outward or inward, are strong and vivid: The limits between them are more exactly determined: Nor is it easy to fall into any error or mistake with regard to them. When we entertain, therefore, any suspicion, that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequent), we need but enquire, from what impression is that supposed idea derived? And if it be impossible to assign any, this will serve to confirm our suspicion. By bringing ideas into so clear a light, we may reasonably hope to remove all dispute, which may arise, concerning their nature and reality. (E 22)

But how can the priority principle, that is ostensibly about ideas and impressions, be used to help settle issues on the meaning of linguistic expressions, or terms? According to Hume, as this passage clearly indicates, this principle is able to accomplish this task by virtue of the assimilation, if not identification, of the meaning of a term with the idea(s) associated with that term. That Hume commits himself to this equation is amply illustrated in the above passage from the Enquiry, especially when he
offers the following advice:

When we entertain, therefore, any suspicion, that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequent), we need but enquire, from what impression is that supposed idea derived? (E 22, my underlining)

Suppose then that it is the term 'necessary connection' that needs to be elucidated. How would we proceed? Hume's response, as the passage above suggests, is to search for the impression that apparently gives rise to the idea necessary connection. And this is where the problem begins, argues Hume. Let us see why he adopts this stance.

15. The requirement that we identify an impression for the term 'necessary connection' proves problematic, according to Hume, because the (empirical) evidence at hand - or rather, the lack of it - suggests that this term has no associated impression:

...I turn the object on all sides, in order to discover the nature of this necessary connection, and find the impression, or impressions, from which its idea may be deriv'd. When I cast my eye on the known qualities of objects, I immediately discover that the relation of cause and effect depends not in the least on them. When I consider their relations, I can find none but those of contiguity and succession; which I have already regarded as imperfect and unsatisfactory. (T 77)

Now this outcome has a number of potentially serious ramifications, according to Hume. In the first place, what appears to be at stake for him, is the meaningfulness of the term 'necessary connection', and hence that of the related term 'causality'. Secondly, the failure to find an impression for the term 'necessary connection', according to Hume - given what appears to be his views on the existence of the idea of necessary connection - can be construed as a counter-example to the priority principle: thereby raising questions about the viability of this principle. Furthermore, as I shall attempt to show below, it can also be argued that there is far more at stake than the two issues mentioned here. As I see it, a case can be made that the overall objective of the Treatise is itself on the line. Let us consider each of these alleged possible problem areas in turn.

16. To begin with, the failure to identify an impression for the term
'necessary connection' has potentially serious repercussions for the significance of this term, and hence for that of the related term 'causality'. Given what appears to be Hume's theory of meaning, and especially the role of his priority principle in this theory, the failure to discover the impression for 'necessary connection' strongly suggests that this 'term is employed without any meaning or idea'. (E 22) That is to say, it appears that this term is meaningless, and hence that the term 'cause', if not also meaningless, at least has a complex meaning different to that usually attributed to it. Unfortunately, the problem does not end here, as Hume sees it. For the difficulty, referred to above, over the impression for the term 'necessary connection' not only influences our views on the significance of this term, but for Hume - given what appears to be an assumption of his on the existence of the idea of necessary connection - also appears to raise questions about the adequacy of the priority principle. Let us see why Hume subscribes to this additional and different view.7

17. The initial failure to discover the requisite impression for the term 'necessary connection', as Hume sees it, can be perceived as a major challenge to the priority principle - a principle that he is loath to relinquish:

    Shall the despair of success [of finding an impression for the term 'necessary connection'] make me assert, that I am here possesst of an idea, which is not preceded by any similar impression? This wou'd be too strong a proof of levity and inconstance; since the contrary principle has been already so firmly establish'd, as to admit of no farther doubt; at least, till we have more fully examin'd the present difficulty. (T 77, my insert)

Reluctant to adopt the view that the (presumably existent) idea of necessary connection is not preceded by a resembling impression - a position that runs counter to the allegedly entrenched priority principle - Hume suggests that we persist in our search for the requisite impression.8 In short, Hume is here pleading for a stay of execution: delay the decision to eject, or even modify the priority principle, until such time as all the options have been explored. For with the priority principle undermined, we are likely to find that we have returned to the position where we are unable to 'render every dispute equally intelligible, and banish all that jargon, which has so long taken possession of metaphysical reasonings, and drawn disgrace upon them'. (E 21)
18. Now it is important to note that the failure to discover an impression for the term 'necessary connection' can compromise the priority principle only if the idea of necessary connection is already in existence. Without this idea, the failure to discover the requisite impression cannot count against the priority principle. At best, it has repercussions only for the term: for what seems to be entailed is merely the suggestion that the term 'necessary connection' is 'a philosophical term...employed without any meaning'. (E 22) So it comes as no surprise to find that when Hume presents the possibility of a threat to his priority principle, it appears that he tacitly assumes that there already is an idea of necessary connection. Having suggested that the 'compleat idea of causation' encompasses that of necessary connection - as we saw earlier - Hume goes on to ask a question that appears to presuppose that the idea of necessary connection not only is a possibility, but that it exists:

Shall the despair of success [of finding an impression for the term 'necessary connection'] make me assert, that I am here possesst of an idea, which is not preceded by any similar impression? (T 77, my insert and emphasis)

Now this, admittedly, is not conclusive evidence that Hume is committed to the view that there is an idea of necessary connection. Nevertheless, it does at least support my suggestion that when Hume raises the possibility of a threat to the priority principle, he appears to do so on the basis of an assumption on the existence of this idea. Given this crucial assumption - a position that the preliminary evidence suggests Hume is committed to - the failure to discover an impression for 'necessary connection' can be viewed as a threat to the priority principle. But this principle, based as it is on observation and experience, is a cornerstone of the 'experimental method' that Hume intends to rely on in his attempt to help establish 'a compleat system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new'. (T xvi) So a threat to this principle may well delay, if not undermine Hume's attempts to aid in the erection of a new science.

19. In the introduction to the Treatise, having argued that there 'is no question of importance, whose decision is not compriz'd in the science of man' (T xvi), Hume goes on to suggest that the science of man ought to be founded on experience:

...as the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences, so the only solid foundation we can give to this
science itself must be laid on experience and observation. (T xvi)

But if Hume is intent on establishing 'a compleat system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new' (T xvi), an important question arises: are there any tools fit for this daunting task? That is to say, are there any tools that Hume, and others, can rely on that will aid in the task, and hopefully ensure that the new foundation survives the vicissitudes likely to be encountered? Yes, intimates, Hume: there are reliable tools for the builder of this new foundation - namely, those tools that have been refined through 'experience and observation'. Most important, the priority principle appears to possess the requisite credentials. An ostensibly contingent proposition, based on Hume's observations and experiences of the interactions of, and relations between his impressions and ideas, the priority principle is viewed by Hume as an invaluable, if not indispensable tool for the attainment of his objective in the Treatise: namely, of contributing, through 'the introduction of the experimental method', to the erection of an a posteriori science of man.9 For it turns out that the priority principle features prominently in Hume's account of necessary connection - a component, as we have seen, that Hume views as the centrepiece of the Treatise. Bereft of this principle, it seems that for Hume, attempts to argue for the results of his (subsequent) analysis not only become difficult, but impossible. For if the term 'necessary connection' constitutes a counter-example to the priority principle, it does so by virtue of the existence of an idea of necessary connection, and the non-existence of an impression for the term. But then any subsequent attempt to argue for the presence of an (hitherto undiscovered) impression for this term involves the assertion of the existence of a non-existent impression. And given the centrality of this issue, the general thrust of the Treatise is likely to suffer from Hume's inability to secure his views on necessary connection. For the strength of the overall argument of the Treatise can be no greater than the weakness of its strongest link. So any serious threat to the priority principle, for instance, through the unearthing of potential counter-examples, such as that that might be produced by the term 'necessary connection', not only diminishes the viability of this principle, but more importantly for Hume, could seriously threaten the stated overall objective of the Treatise to help establish a science of man that is based on experience and observation.

20. This suggests, if my reasoning above and interpretations of the texts are correct, that as Hume sees it, the stakes are high where the search for
an impression for 'necessary connection' is concerned. For it appears that the meaningfulness of this term is not the only item on the line, as it were. If my arguments above are correct, and if we grant that Hume appears committed to the assumption that he already possesses an idea of necessary connection, it also seems that the viability of the priority principle, if not the viability of the Treatise's overall project, stand to be compromised if no impression for the term is found. Now unfortunately, the evidence at hand suggests that there is no impression for the term, according to Hume. Neither the study of the sensible qualities of external objects, nor the investigation of his ideas reveal the sought for impression. As we have seen, when Hume turns 'the object on all sides, in order to discover the nature of this necessary connection, and find the impression, or impressions, from which its idea may be deriv'd', no impression is to be found. (T 77) This initial failure to discover an impression for the term 'necessary connection' raises a serious problem, suggests Hume. For it gives rise to a dilemma on the meaningfulness of the term.

21. As Hume sees it, this failure compels one to conclude either that the term 'necessary connection' is not associated with an impression - which for Hume, given what appears to be his assumption that he already possesses an idea of necessary connection, has the undesirable consequence of undermining the priority principle, and perhaps the overall objective of the Treatise - or one persists with the view that the term is meaningful. And if the latter is our course of action, given both our adherence to the priority principle and the assumption that there is an idea of necessary connection, we need to redouble our efforts to discover the required impression. An unequiviable task, for this second alternative is likely to be the source of further difficulties, because neither the investigation of external objects nor that of (internal) ideas has produced the desired impression. Therefore, as Hume sees it, one finally either concedes that there is no idea associated with the term 'necessary connection', or one is compelled to open up entirely new avenues of investigation for the evasive impression, thereby ultimately opting for a non-standard, and hence likely controversial, impression for the term. As Hume bluntly puts it in the Treatise,

[e]ither we have no idea of necessity, or necessity is nothing but that determination of the thought to pass from causes to effects, and from effects to causes, according to their experienc'd union'. (T 166)
In short, Hume appears to view the problem of necessary connection as a dilemma that compels one either to renounce 'necessary connection' as a vacuous term, or to pursue an impression in uncharted territory. And as it happens, Hume appears to pursue the latter course of action in his way out of the dilemma. For he suggests that we

...must, therefore, proceed like those, who being in search of any thing, that lies conceal'd from them, and not finding it in the place they expected, beat about all the neighbouring fields, without any certain view or design, in hopes their good fortune will at last guide them to what they search for. (T 78)

This decision to explore new pastures, as I intend to argue in the next chapter, takes Hume into the mysterious realm of psychological dispositions, inclinations and instincts. However, while the beating in this field initially proves productive, it remains to be seen whether the beast that is flushed out is really what Hume is after.

22. This scenario of Hume's assessment of the problem of necessary connection raises a number of questions. It is my intention in this essay to explore some of them. In particular, the broad objective of this enquiry is to investigate the central philosophical questions that arise from what appears to be Hume's attempt to safeguard the meaningfulness of the expression 'necessary connection'. In the next chapter, given this preliminary and tentative background framework as an introduction to the essay, I shall attempt to determine, as precisely as possible, Hume's solution to 'the problem of necessary connection'. As I shall argue, close analysis of the texts reveals that Hume appears to endorse a complex thesis on necessary connection, two components of which must be distinguished if we are to fully grasp his contribution to this metaphysical issue. But what are Hume's arguments for his views on necessary connection? Equally important, how adequate are these arguments? These are the central questions of Chapter Three: questions that cannot be dealt with adequately, without revealing the underlying assumptions of Hume's views on necessary connection. Now as we have seen in this introductory chapter, a fundamental component of Hume's conception of the problem of necessary connection is his theory of meaning. So it is to be expected that Hume's views on meaning feature prominently in his solutions to the problem. Hence Chapter Three, that is devoted to the articulation, and evaluation of Hume's arguments for his account of necessary connection, amongst other things, will involve an investigation of aspects of this theory of meaning. Finally,
Chapter Four is an attempt to broaden the scope of this investigation through a detailed analysis of Hume's conception of the problem of necessary connection. Having set out with a preliminary and tentative account of Hume's conception of the problem, with Hume's views on necessary connection before us, and with insight into some of the assumptions that underlie these views, I think that by Chapter Four we will be in the position to return to our point of departure, and as more seasoned explorers, reconsider the fibres of the dilemma that Hume appears to regard as endemic to the problem of necessary connection. As we shall see, this preliminary account of Hume's assessment of the situation is not entirely adequate, in that it proves to be incomplete in some important respects.

Notes.

1. For a thorough, and systematic account of the early reception of the Treatise, see Ernest C. Mossner: 'The Continental Reception of Hume's Treatise, 1739-1741', in Mind, LVI (1947), 31-43.

2. In his advertisement for the Treatise, Hume explicitly points out that what he really seeks is the approval of the public at large:

   The approbation of the public I consider as the greatest reward of my labours; but am determin'd to regard its judgment, whatever it be, as my best instruction. (T xii, Hume's emphasis)

Unfortunately, as subsequent events were to make clear, the youthful and naive Hume had not reckoned on the influence of the community of reviewers.

3. This move by Hume has been regarded by some as further confirmation of their view that Hume was a charlatan, more concerned with popular appeal, than the truth. Here are three examples of this interpretation of Hume's attempts to make his (paradoxical) ideas more accessible to as wide an audience as possible. Dr John Brown, in his Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times (London 1757), complained that
Hume was a writer 'of our own Times, bent upon *Popularity* and *Gain*'.

(57) The Danish scholar Vinding Kruse, went a step further when he suggested that while Hume 'was, indeed, a man with many irons in the fire, a man with divers aims', he was not a seeker of truth: for 'among these aims the realization of truth was not the most important; for Hume was possessed by literary ambition to such an extent that he set aside all considerations, even the consideration of truth, in order to win the favour of the public'. (Kruse 1939: 8) Finally, John Randall boldly asserts that 'Hume wrote for two purposes: to make money, and to gain a literary reputation'. (Randall 1947: 289) For an investigation of this set of noncharitable interpretations of Hume's philosophy, see Ernest Mossner: 'Philosophy and biography: the case of David Hume'. *The Philosophical Review*, Vol LIX (1950)

4. Or at least Hume's agent. While we cannot be certain that it was Hume who formulated the titles of the *Abstract* - just as we cannot be certain that Hume is the author of its contents, as I pointed out earlier - I contend that the fact that Hume oversaw its publication is at least circumstantial evidence that Hume endorsed the wording of the title, if not authored it himself. Furthermore, the fact that he did not impede the publication of a subsequent edition of the *Abstract*, with a title that replicates the non-emotional component of the original title, strongly suggests that Hume at least approved of this component of the titles. So, while we cannot be certain that it was Hume who wrote the titles, their appearance - especially that of the subsequent edition - as I see it, is proof that he at least endorsed the component we are interested in, if not wrote it himself.

5. In fact, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant not only acknowledges this essential role of necessary connection in causality, but even cites it as a mark against Hume's account of necessary connection. Kant goes as far as to suggest that the idea of necessary connection occupies such a fundamental and dominant position in the idea of causality that attempts, such as that made by Hume, to place the source of the idea of necessary connection in experience, are misguided *ab initio*:

...indeed, the very concept of a cause so manifestly contains the concept of a necessity of connection with an effect and of the strict universality of the rule, that the concept would be altogether lost if we attempted to derive it, as Hume has done, from a repeated association of that which happens with that which precedes, and from a custom of connecting represen-
tations, a custom originating in this repeated association, and
constituting therefore a merely subjective necessity...(Kant
1978, 44)

Chapter Four contains an assessment of Kant's conception of the problem
that underlies Hume's views on necessary connection.

6. Many commentators have traced this procedure to Locke. (Cf. Stroud
1977, 17; Kemp Smith 1964, 3; Flew 1986, 16 - to give but three
examples.) Now it is true that in his An essay concerning human
understanding, John Locke does attempt to establish a relationship
between the meaning of a term and the idea associated with that term. For
instance, in his account of communication in Book III, Locke does suggest
that the primary signification of words are ideas. However, while it can be
shown that for Locke there is a considerable overlap between the two
notions of meaning and idea, as I see it, it remains to be seen whether
Hume is operating with Locke's theory of meaning.

7. Jonathan Bennett appears to be more forthright in his interpretation, and
depicts Hume's argument on 'necessary connection' as follows: '...since it
cannot be verbally defined, the phrase 'necessary connection' does not
have a complex meaning; and since we do not experience instances of
'necessary connection', that phrase does not have a simple meaning; so it
has no meaning at all'. (Bennett 1977: 257) However, as my discussion will
later testify, this does not appear to be an accurate portrayal of Hume's
position, for Hume does not conclude that 'necessary connection' is a
meaningless term, as appears to be suggested here by Bennett. In fact, as I
shall argue, Hume is at pains to preserve the meaningfulness of the term.

8. Barry Stroud has also drawn attention to Hume's desire to save his 'main
methodological principle' by searching for an impression for 'necessary
connection'. (Stroud 1977: 45) But then he later suggests that Hume's
theory of ideas, of which his priority principle is the central component,
'impedes the development of his [naturalistic] programme'. (Stroud 1977:
224, my insert) This latter suggestion strikes me as problematic, and
clearly departs from my view on the role of the priority principle. The issue
is dealt with in Chapter Four.

9. According to Hume, there already are major contributions to the
science of man that is based on experience and observation. Contributions
have already been made by 'some late philosophers in England', namely by
'Mr. Locke, my Lord Shaftsbury, Dr. Mandeville, Mr. Hutchinson, Dr. Butler, &c'. (T xvii)

10. For Hume, a term is meaningless if one cannot identify an impression for that term: 'When we entertain...any suspicion that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea...we need but enquire, from what impression is that supposed idea derived? And if it be impossible to assign any, this will serve to confirm our suspicion'. (E 22)

11. Had one to adopt the first option here, given Hume's views on the relationship of a term's meaning and its impression, the further implication might be that the term 'necessary connection' is meaningless. But then we would have an instance of a meaningless term that was associated with an idea - and this would run counter to the received view that for Hume, terms with ideas are ipso facto meaningful.
CHAPTER TWO

Hume's view on necessary connection

1. The notion power, or energy is part and parcel of our everyday lives and conversations. It is not uncommon for us to talk about the strength of powerful athletes, or of children who are especially energetic, of financial systems that are economically powerful, and of motor vehicles that lack sufficient power to haul heavy loads. But what is it that we are talking about when we use these expressions? In particular, what is power, or energy?

2. As I intend to show in this chapter, David Hume has an answer to this question - an answer that one might find startling. However, his novel view on power, as we shall soon realize, is not especially lucid, and is far from unambiguous. As a prominent critic has observed, Hume's views on power have been expressed in passages that are 'extremely obscure and confusing'. (Stroud 1977: 79) Presented under the rubric of necessary connection, it can be argued that section XIV of Part III, Book I of the Treatise, and section VII of the Enquiry, contain a series of terse, unclear and not least, controversial statements on power, as well as a complex defence of this position. We need to carefully consider both these components of Hume's discussion. In this chapter let us determine the nature of Hume' thesis on power, or necessary connection, and leave it to the chapter that follows to articulate and assess the support for Hume's view. But first an important, preliminary issue needs to be raised and attended to. It concerns Hume's claim that a number of expressions are nearly synonymous with 'necessary connection'.

Section One: Hume's claim on the near synonymy of certain terms.

3. As the two paragraphs above intimate, Hume views the expression 'necessary connection' as a catch-all phrase, for as he sees it, this expression has almost the same meaning as various other expressions, such as 'power', 'energy' and 'efficacy':


I begin with observing that the terms of *efficacy, agency, power, force, energy, necessity, connexion, and productive quality*, are all nearly synonymous. (T 157)

Curiously enough, the phrase 'necessary connection' is not on this list - an omission that is striking, given its prominence in Hume's subsequent discussion. Nevertheless, this oversight need not concern us, because the context of these remarks - which is entitled, 'Of the idea of necessary connexion' - and the occurrence of the two related expressions 'necessity' and 'connexion', strongly suggests that Hume intended this phrase to be included with the others on the list. This explains Hume's practice later in his discussion to interchange the terms - including that of 'necessary connection' - from this list. For instance, while he sets out with the objective of examining 'the idea we have of ...efficacy' (T 156, my emphasis), he evaluates rival theories on the purported 'real power and energy [of] matter' (T 160, my insert and emphasis), asserts that 'the supposition of a deity can serve us in no stead, in accounting for that idea of agency...' (T 160, my emphasis), denies that the human mind can 'form such an idea of two objects, as to conceive any connexion betwixt them, or comprehend distinctly that power or efficacy, by which they are united' (T 161, my emphasis), only to later develop his own views on 'the necessary connexion betwixt causes and effects'. (T 165, my emphasis)¹ In the analysis that follows, we need to bear in mind Hume's remarks on the alleged near synonymy between 'necessary connection' and these other terms. Otherwise, one is likely to be bewildered by the rapid shifts in Hume's discussion from talk on one expression to talk on another expression.

4. Unfortunately, this claim on the near synonymy of certain metaphysical terms is beset with problems. In the first place, if the terms on this list are 'nearly synonymous' as Hume suggests, can an explication for one double as an explication for another term? For Hume is not suggesting that the terms are *entirely* synonymous - for him, they are 'nearly synonymous'. (T 157, my emphasis) But if there is less than *total* agreement between the meaning of these terms, Hume is surely precluded from implicitly suggesting - as his subsequent shifts from term to term does suggest - that an explication for one is equally an explication for all the other terms from this list. For it seems that the fit - if I may speak like this - of an explication E¹ for one term T², is a function of the degree of overlap in the meaning of term T² and that of term T¹, for which the explication E¹ was originally developed. Thus, if there is a disparity in the meanings of the terms on some list of associated terms, as is
the case in Hume's discussion in Section XIV, Part III of Book I of the Treatise, the overall discussion is bound to be compromised by the corresponding deterioration in the fit, and hence the adequacy, of the explications proffered by Hume, as he moves through the list of terms. For the conclusions arrived at by analysis under one term, cannot be extrapolated pari passu to an analysis of another term unless the terms are entirely synonymous. Which brings me to the second, perhaps more fundamental issue raised by this preamble to Hume's analysis of necessary connection.

5. There appears to be little doubt in Hume's mind about the semantic standing of the terms on his list of related terms. As he categorically states it in the Treatise, these terms 'are all nearly synonimous'. (T 157) For the moment I shall ignore the consequences of this claim - such as that outlined above - and focus on the issue of the grounds, or justification for this bold assertion by Hume. On what basis does Hume rest this claim? Unfortunately, this is a question that cannot be conclusively settled one way or the other, for he fails to set out any reasons to explain why he thinks that this position is true. Other than the bold assertion

I begin with observing that the terms of efficacy, agency, power, force, energy, necessity, connexion, and productive quality, are all nearly synonimous...(T 157),

Hume fails to provide any defence for this assertion on the near synonymy of the terms. Thus it seems that an important preliminary component of Hume's discussion of necessary connection not only threatens to affect the scope of the outcome of his analysis - due to the issues highlighted in the previous two paragraphs - but also poses a threat to the logical standing of the analysis. For if Hume has failed to justify his claim that the terms on the list are nearly synonymous - as I suggest is the case - this failure would preclude the possibility of Hume later asserting that his particular account of necessary connection is sound. More particularly, Hume could not claim that his theses on necessary connection were true. At best, he might be able to assert that his theses on necessary connection are valid deductions from the premisses of his arguments: he could not justifiably assert that these theses were true. Without the verification of the synonymy claim - that proves essential to Hume's analysis of 'power, 'energy', 'force', 'necassary connexion' - a
fundamental component of the structure supporting his views on necessary connection remains unproven, if not suspect. In short, it appears that the failure to defend his view on the near synonymy of the terms threatens to compromise the outcome of Hume's analysis of necessary connection. Which raises an important question: why does Hume make this bold, and apparently unsubstantiated claim? For if the objective of this section of his discussion is to develop an account specifically of necessary connection, as the title 'Of the idea of necessary connexion' intimates, surely Hume could afford to overlook the claim on the list of (allegedly) near synonymous terms, and simply concentrate on 'necessary connection'? So why does he go ahead and expose himself to objections that threaten to compromise his discussion, when it appears that his claim has little more than a tangential bearing on the primary focus of this section of his discussion? As I see it, there are at least three factors that can help explain this contentious move by Hume: what can be called the methodological factor, the stylistic factor, and the philosophical factor. Take the first possible reason for the claim.

6. To begin with, there can be little doubt that Hume makes his claim on the near synonymy of the terms in order to discredit a rival procedure for developing an account of necessary connection. For when he states that the terms on the list are 'nearly synonymous', he does so by way of an objection to an (anticipated) suggestion on the elucidation of the metaphysical terms he is interested in. The suggestion that Hume attempts to preempt is this: 'necessary connection' can be elucidated by 'efficacy', 'agency', 'power', 'force', 'energy', 'necessity', 'connexion', or 'productive quality'. Now, in claiming that these terms are 'all nearly synonymous' (T 157), Hume allegedly undercuts in one stroke a procedure for the elucidation of 'necessary connection' that he objects to, and prepares the way for his own treatment. Which explains why Hume, immediately after making his claim on the near synonymy of the terms, concludes that the established procedure for elucidating the terms he is interested in is not acceptable:

I begin with observing that the terms of efficacy, agency, power, force, energy, necessity, connexion, and productive quality, are all nearly synonymous; and therefore 'tis an absurdity to employ any of them in defining the rest. By this observation we reject at once all the vulgar definitions, which philosophers have given of power and efficacy, and instead of searching for the idea in these definitions, must look for it in the impression, from which it is originally deriv'd. (T 157)
Operating with the contentious suggestion that none of the terms on the list can be relied on to illuminate or define any of the other terms on this list of synonymous terms, Hume dismisses the entrenched procedures relied on by philosophers to explicate these terms. Assuming that these 'nearly synonymous' terms are equally obscure - and presumably useless in explanations that could be formulated with them - Hume proposes we adopt a different procedure to elucidate 'necessary connection': search for the impression associated with the term's idea. Eager to articulate and defend his own account of 'necessary connection' - an account that rests on the new methodology - in presenting the synonymy claim, Hume, among other things, appears anxious to undermine the established procedure that has been relied on by others to develop rival accounts of power, or energy. Thus it seems that Hume has certain methodological reasons for his claim.\(^2\)

7. In the second place, I think that Hume has stylistic reasons for making the claim on the near synonymy of the terms. In both the *Treatise* and *Enquiry* discussions on necessary connection, Hume critically evaluates numerous competing positions. Rather than laboriously assess each of these rival theories on an individual basis - a procedure bound to be aesthetically deficient - Hume, in making his claim on the near synonymy of the different terms, prepares the way for an efficient and neat assessment of the multitude of competing theories he is interested in. For now Hume can deal with these different positions *en masse*. When we bear in mind that Hume viewed himself as a man of letters,\(^3\) and who throughout his life sought a literary name for himself, I think this proposal of mine acquires added plausibility. For it is axiomatic that one who yearns for a literary reputation has a concern for style, and when he wrote the *Treatise*, Hume considered this factor significant, as the following extract makes clear. Soon after the publication of the *Treatise*, Hume approached the prolific, and presumably successful writer Pierre Desmaizeaux for his considered assessment of his 'performance':

Have you found it sufficiently intelligible? Does it appear true to you?  *Do the Style & Language seem tolerable?* These three Questions comprehend everything; & I beg of you to answer them with the utmost Freedom & Sincerity. I know 'tis a Custom to flatter Poets on their Performances; but I hope Philosophers may be exempted... (G 29/30, my emphasis)\(^4\)

So perhaps stylistic considerations do form part of the motivations for Hume's near synonymy claim. However, it appears that aesthetics is not
the only factor motivating Hume's decision to treat the terms *en masse*. For there is a third likely reason for the claim - one that is arguably the most substantial of the reasons for Hume's assertion on the near synonymy of the metaphysical terms he is interested in. This I call the philosophical factor.

8. As has been pointed out already, in the course of his discussion on necessary connection Hume briefly outlines and assesses a number of views from other philosophers. It is, however, not obvious that these are all competing theories of *necessary connection*. For the various theories - as Hume depicts them - differ in their terminology in crucial respects, and draw on terms different to those relied on by Hume when articulating his theory. So if Hume both intends to advance a theory of necessary connection and to discredit his rivals' theories, it is incumbent on him to establish the relationship between his own theory and those endorsed by his rivals. Failure to do so could seriously diminish the stature of his theory. So when Hume makes the claim on the near synonymy of the terms on his list, as I see it, among other things, he is aligning his theory with those endorsed by his rivals, and making it possible for the theories to be compared and contrasted with each other. If I am correct on this score, it would appear that besides the methodological and stylistic reasons for the claim, Hume would also have other reasons for making his claim - namely, reasons that concern the logical relationship between his views and those of his rivals. For all this, it seems that it is advisable for Hume to make his claim on the near synonymy of the terms.

9. But if Hume has good reasons for making his claim on the near synonymy of the terms, as has been argued above, why has he failed to defend it? For surely he would at least attempt to defend this claim if it is as crucial to his overall project on necessary connection as has been previously suggested? One likely explanation for Hume's failure to defend the claim is this: when he makes the claim, he is distracted from the need to justify it, and perhaps more concerned to put it to some specific use. That this may well be the case is borne out by a consideration of the context in which Hume makes his claim. As I pointed out earlier, when he makes his claim, Hume is attempting to undercut the (alleged) established procedure of explicating the term 'necessary connection' - a procedure that stresses the need to define the term. Less concerned with the (logical) role of his claim in his subsequent discussion, than with its function as a stimulant for a new methodology for developing an account of necessary connection, Hume just happens to overlook the (logical)
requirements associated with it. While not explaining why Hume entirely overlooks the need to defend his claim, this explanation at least has the merit of accounting for Hume's failure to defend his claim at the time of its introduction. And from here it is not impossible to understand why Hume later fails to defend the claim: with part of his analysis already behind him, perhaps he simply forgets to do so. Eager to develop his own new, paradoxical view on necessary connection, Hume is more likely to move on to the theory itself, than to retrace his steps in order to defend a claim that was made at the initial stages of the discussion.

10. Of course, all this is highly speculative, and is likely to remain so without specific comments on the issues by Hume. But this is not where this issue ends, however. What makes the matter even more intriguing is the fact that Hume appears to withdraw the claim from his later Enquiry discussion of necessary connection. For one thing, the synonymy claim is entirely absent from that section of the Enquiry that ought to contain it, if any section should - namely, section VII, entitled 'Of the Idea of Necessary Connexion'. And to my knowledge, we have absolutely no reference anywhere else in the Enquiry to this Treatise suggestion that certain important metaphysical terms of 'power', 'force', 'energy', 'necessity' etc are 'all nearly synonymous'. What are we to make of this conspicuous omission? Surely Hume does not want to suggest that the claim is no longer important for his later Enquiry analysis of necessary connection? For the Enquiry's analysis of the issue parallels that of the Treatise in many respects. In particular, Hume once again articulates and critically evaluates a number of competing theories of necessary connection. And as with the Treatise, the Enquiry discussion involves shifts between the various terms. Concluding that 'there is not, in any single, particular instance of cause and effect, any thing which can suggest the idea of power or necessary connexion' (E 63, my emphasis), Hume goes on to talk about 'the power or energy of any cause' (E 63, my emphasis), and then refers to 'the power or force' of objects in the universe (E 63, my emphasis); only to move to a discussion on 'the secret connexion' of bound events. (E 66, my emphasis) So if the claim on near synonymy plays a crucial role in the Treatise - as I have argued above - given this parallelism, the claim must also be crucial to the Enquiry's investigation. Which suggests, as I see it, that the omission of the claim from the Enquiry need not be construed as proof that Hume has downgraded its importance. On the other hand, its total excision from the Enquiry discussion on necessary connection may be an indication that Hume is aware of the problems that surround his claim, but rather than attempt to address them - a task that is not central to our enquiry here, and is
cumbersome - Hume decides to jettison the claim altogether. According to this suggestion, the omission of the claim from the *Enquiry* analysis of necessary connection can be construed as an acknowledgement - albeit an implicit one - that there are difficulties with the claim.

11. But this suggestion does not square entirely with the remarks Hume makes in the advertisement for the *Enquiry*. More specifically, this suggestion is not altogether compatible with his statement on the relationship between the *Enquiry* and the *Treatise*. In the advertisement, that first appeared in the posthumous 1777 edition of the *Enquiry*, Hume states that he

> cast the whole [i.e. the *Treatise*] anew in the following pieces [i.e. the *Enquiry*], where some former negligences in [my] former reasoning and more in the expression, are, [I hope], corrected. (E 2, my inserts and emphasis)

If by 'negligences' he means 'omissions', this extract seems to suggest that Hume views the *Enquiry* as both a more elegant and complete account of some of the issues he explored in the *Treatise*. By implication, this would suggest that Hume considers the *Enquiry* analysis of necessary connection - an issue that plays such a dominant role in the *Treatise* - as more elegant and complete than his earlier treatment of the problem of necessary connection. But a crucial component of the earlier treatment - namely, the claim on the synonymy of the terms - that calls for further elaboration and justification, does not even appear in the later (allegedly) more elegant and complete account of necessary connection. Which suggests that Hume omitted this component from his later analysis of necessary connection to enhance the aesthetic standing of the *Enquiry*. In that case, the omission of his synonymy claim from the *Enquiry* not only is an admission of its problematic standing, but more importantly, serves notice that Hume views these problems as insignificant from a logical point of view. So, in the light of the advertisement to the *Enquiry*, and my analysis above, it appears that Hume perceives the shortcomings that surround his synonymy claim as mere stylistic problems, likely to influence the aesthetic standing of his analysis of necessary connection. For had he viewed the problems associated with his claim as more substantial than mere questions of elegance, not only would he have reasserted his view on the synonymy of the terms, but surely he would also have attempted to fill in and complete this component of his discussion. That is to say, had Hume viewed the problems with his *Treatise* claim as substantial problems, in the *Enquiry* he
would surely have presented his claim again, and either attempted to defend it, or explained why it could not be defended, in order to produce a more complete account of his earlier discussion of necessary connection. For then this would have provided him with an account in which 'some former negligences' or omissions had been attended to.

12. But as I have argued above, this synonymy claim is not some innocuous assertion that Hume is free to overlook. On the contrary, it is an integral component of Hume's investigation into necessary connection, that if not explicitly defended, threatens to jeopardize the outcome of his analyses. Hume's assessment of this claim notwithstanding, in both his *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* analyses - as will become even more apparent in the next chapter - it is assumed that the claim on the near synonymy of 'the terms efficacy, agency, power, force, energy, necessity, connexion, and productive quality ...' (T 157) is true. So Hume's failure to defend this thesis central to his analyses must constitute a serious shortcoming in his investigation, and weaken, if not undermine his attempt to erect a radical view on necessary connection. With this important preliminary issue behind us, we now need to turn to the central question of this chapter: namely, what does Hume suggest necessary connection is?

**Section two: Two components of Hume's view on necessary connection.**

13. We are likely to generate numerous 'difficulties' for Hume's thesis on necessary connection if we fail to distinguish between the two major components of his position. As I am about to demonstrate below, there are two fundamentally different constituents to his account of necessary connection, and they need to be clearly distinguished.

   (i) In the first place, we shall see that Hume presents us with a theory on the *source of the idea* of necessary connection.

   (ii) In the second place, and perhaps most significant, it is important to understand that he goes further, and on the basis of the argument for his theory on the source of the idea, endorses a theory on *necessary connection itself*.

But how can arguments for a theory on the source of the idea of necessary connection be relied on to support a theory on necessary connection itself? Are these not separate *types* of theories? Without any clarification, these
are not likely to strike one as necessarily congruent enterprises. But as Hume sees things, they are. So, besides the attempt to clearly demarcate and distinguish these two components of his view, in what follows I shall also attempt to relate and reconcile what may appear to be two disparate theses. To begin with, take my first suggestion that Hume’s view of necessary connection encompasses a theory on the source of the idea of necessary connection. This theory, as we shall soon realize, does not appear to be especially ambitious, but after due consideration of its role in the discussion, will be seen to be a fundamental prelude to a radical suggestion by Hume: namely, that necessary connection is a specific determination of the mind.

14. Initially, it seems that Hume’s view of necessary connection commits him to talk only on the origin of the idea of necessary connection, and to a consideration of the relationships between particular subjective phenomena, impressions and ideas:

The idea of necessity arises from some impression. There is no impression convey’d by our senses, which can give rise to that idea. It must, therefore, be deriv’d from some internal impression, or impression of reflexion. There is no internal impression, which has any relation to the present business, but that propensity, which custom produces, to pass from an object to the idea of its usual attendant. This therefore is the essence of necessity. (T 165)

As I shall show later in the next chapter, this would appear to mark a radical shift by Hume from his rivals’ views on the source of the idea of necessity. Rather than locate the source of this metaphysical idea in some external source, such as some external object, or God, as has (purportedly) been done by his predecessors, Hume, after some broad sorties, focusses his investigation on the mental, or subjective workings of the mind, and suggests that the source of the idea of necessity is to be found in this arena. As he bluntly, and rather cryptically puts it, in the sentence that immediately follows the passage above: 'upon the whole, necessity is something that exists in the mind, not in objects'. (T 165)

15. What precisely does this last statement mean? As it stands, it is clear that this is an ambiguous remark by Hume. In the first place, the statement appears to assert that necessity is a mental phenomenon. For the claim that X exists in Y, among other things, for Hume, presumably amounts to
the suggestion that X has certain fundamental characteristics in common with Y. For instance, one might claim that dreams cannot exist in water because dreams do not appear to possess any physical characteristics i.e. dreams and water do not share any common fundamental characteristics. So if the claim is that necessity exists in the mind - as Hume maintains is the case - it can be suggested that this claim means that necessity and the mind (allegedly) share certain fundamental features i.e. the claim might be that necessity is at least a mental phenomenon. But then Hume's suggestion, if it is articulated along the lines proposed here, does not appear to preclude the possibility that necessity is more than a mental phenomenon - or as Hume might put it, that necessity also exists in some third type of entity - one that is neither mental nor an object. Furthermore, what significance ought to be attached to the qualifying clause, 'upon the whole'? Is Hume suggesting thereby that there are no exceptions to his statement on the essence of necessity, or is he perhaps using this phrase to indicate that his is only a tentative statement, perhaps in need of further corroboration or qualification? One way to disambiguate this statement, and thus perhaps resolve these questions, is to consider the context in which the expression occurs. As I see it, the immediate context in which the statement occurs suggests at least two major interpretations.

16. In the first place, the opening sentence in the last passage quoted above from the Treatise suggests that Hume is concerned with a question on the source of the idea of necessity - as he sees it, this idea arises from some impression, and the task becomes one of discovering which impression in particular is the source of the idea. In the second last sentence of this passage he goes on to assert that the source of the idea is a particular propensity - namely, that specific propensity to 'pass from an object to the idea of its usual attendant' (T 165). In addition, this propensity, according to Hume, has been generated or produced by custom. So there can be little doubt that Hume thinks that his is at least a (weak) thesis on the source of our ideas of necessity.

17. One passage that appears to support this 'weak thesis interpretation' is the following. Speaking of the outcome of his analysis of necessity, Hume suggests that the

...several instances of resembling conjunctions leads us into the notion of power and necessity. These instances are in themselves totally distinct from each other, and have no union but in the mind, which observes them, and collects their ideas.
Necessity, then, is the effect of this observation, and is nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thought from one object to another. (T 165, my emphases)

If by 'notion' is meant 'idea' - and the context, which is that of ideas and impressions, clearly supports this suggestion - then Hume appears to be claiming here that the idea of necessity is the product of certain internal impressions, or so-called determinations of the mind. This seems to confirm the suggestion above that Hume's theory is at least a theory about the origins of the idea of necessary connection.

18. However, this quotation in support of the weak interpretation also hints at the need for a strong interpretation of Hume's theory. For if necessity - note that Hume talks boldly of necessity, and not of the notion or idea of necessity - is 'nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or determination to carry our thought from one object to another' (T 165, my emphasis), is Hume not also making the stronger claim that necessity itself, and not merely the idea of necessity, is a subjective internal phenomenon? That is to say, is this not evidence that Hume has identified necessity with the internal subjective source of the idea of necessity? That this is a viable interpretation of his position emerges from a consideration of the following passage:

...after we have observ'd the resemblance in a sufficient number of instances, we immediately feel a determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant, and to conceive it in a stronger light upon account of that relation. This determination is the only effect of the resemblance; and therefore must be the same with power or efficacy, whose idea is deriv'd from the resemblance. (T 165, my emphasis)

Given his earlier (problematic) claim on the near synonymy of the terms 'power', 'efficacy' and 'necessity', it is apparent that Hume is asserting here that necessary connection - as opposed to the idea of necessary connection - not only can, but must be identified with the 'determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant'. But what is this 'determination of the mind'? For Hume it is a subjective or 'internal impression of the mind' (T 165). So when Hume asserts that '[t]his determination must be the same with power or energy', it appears that he is asserting that necessary connection is a subjective or internal
phenomenon.

19. However, this is not all. For he goes further, and asserts that the 'efficacy or energy of causes is neither plac'd in the causes themselves, nor in the deity...but belongs entirely to the soul...'(T 166, my emphasis) This additional assertion by Hume strongly suggests that he not only thinks that necessary connection is a subjective phenomenon, but that it occurs in no other form: necessity can only be a subjective phenomenon, for it 'belongs entirely to the soul'. (T 166, my emphasis)

20. If my analysis is correct, there appears to be support for both the weak and strong interpretations of Hume's conclusion that 'upon the whole, necessity is something that exists in the mind'. (T 165) Or as I have also expressed it, there appear to be two major components to Hume's view on necessary connection: the one a thesis on the source of the idea of necessary connection, the other a suggestion on necessary connection itself. Now this raises numerous questions, two of which call for close attention:

(i) Which of the two components is the most important for Hume,
and (ii) how are we to view the relationship between these two parts of Hume's view on necessary connection?

Take the first question.

21. While references to the text cannot decisively settle the matter, the Treatise does contain material that suggests that the major component of his position is his view on necessity itself, and not that on the source of his idea of necessity. For instance, after the assertion of this thesis, and elaborations on it, Hume makes the following remark on a likely response to his thesis:

I am sensible, that of all the paradoxes, which I have had, or shall hereafter have occasion to advance in the course of this treatise, the present one is the most violent, and that 'tis merely by dint of solid proof and reasoning I can ever hope it will have admission, and overcome the inveterate prejudices of mankind. (T 166)

Would Hume refer to his thesis as the most violent of the paradoxes he
advances in the *Treatise*, if his was a weak thesis, merely on the source of our ideas of necessity? I doubt it. When Hume uses such strong terms to describe his thesis, he must surely have the more radical or stronger version of his thesis in mind. For one thing, by the time Hume wrote the *Treatise*, the philosophical community had long debated the merits of the theories of Malebranche and other occasionalists on the source of our ideas of necessity.\(^6\) So the addition of a new theory on the source of our ideas of necessity would likely not elicit the vigorous response Hume envisages his thesis will receive. However, there is a second, and perhaps more compelling reason for reading Hume’s thesis as a radical, or strong thesis.

22. That his thesis is really about necessary connection or necessity, and not merely the source of the idea of necessity, becomes apparent, so I think, when we consider the objection Hume anticipates critics will level at the thesis. As Hume sees it, his critics are likely to respond as follows:

> What! the efficacy of causes lie in the determination of the mind! As if causes did not operate entirely independent of the mind, and wou’d not continue their operation, even tho’ there was no mind existent to contemplate them, or reason concerning them. Thought may well depend on causes for its operation, but not causes on thought. This is to reverse the order of nature, and makes that secondary, which is really primary. To every operation there is a power proportion’d; and this power must be plac’d on the body that operates. If we remove the power from one cause, we must ascribe it to another: But to remove it from all causes, and bestow it on a being, that is no ways related to the cause or effect, but by perceiving them, is a gross absurdity, and contrary to the most certain principles of human nature. (T 167/8, my emphasis)

This anticipated objection to the thesis would be otiose, if Hume’s thesis was merely on the source of the idea of necessity. Now it is true that, generally speaking, a thesis on the source of the idea of necessity does not necessarily preclude theses on necessity or powers in (external) objects, or causes and effects, to use Hume’s terminology. But the fact that Hume explicitly presents this anticipated criticism of his thesis as a criticism of a view that attempts to 'remove [power or necessity] from all causes, and bestow it on a being, that is no ways related to the cause or effect' (T 168), with no mention at all on any thesis on the source of the idea of necessity,
strongly suggests that the criticism is being levelled at a thesis on necessary connection itself, and not at one on the source of the idea of necessary connection. And given that Hume does not respond to this anticipated objection with the charge that it misconstrues his views on necessary connection - as will become apparent in the next chapter - we can be fairly confident about the suggestion that Hume endorses a bold thesis on necessity itself.

23. All this suggests, if my arguments here are acceptable, that Hume's views include a strong thesis on necessity. That is to say, when he concludes that '[u]pon the whole, necessity is something, that exists in the mind, not in objects' (T 165), the evidence suggests that he is asserting a radical thesis on necessity itself, and not merely proposing a thesis on the source of some idea. What then is the relationship, if any, between these two different theses? This is an important issue and needs to be discussed: a task for the next section of this chapter. However, before doing so, I would like to say a few things on Hume's radical thesis on necessary connection.

24. According to my analysis above, the radical thesis endorsed in the *Treatise* concerns necessity and a particular 'determination of the mind': as I see it, this thesis maintains that necessary connection is the determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant. Now in his influential *Hume*, Barry Stroud does not appear to endorse this suggestion of mine. While not denying that Hume's is a radical thesis on necessity, Stroud argues that the thesis is not as I am depicting it. As he sees it - if I read Stroud correctly - the thesis is that necessary connection is the feeling of the determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant. It is not, as I have suggested above, that necessity is the determination itself. In a nutshell, our differences concern the exact nature of the source of the idea of necessary connection: is it some mental determination, as I suggest, or some feeling that is associated with this determination, as Stroud suggests? Consider the case for the latter suggestion.

25. Stroud's argument is as follows. For him, Hume ends his analysis with two options, and in order not to infringe his priority principle, he ought to select only one of the contenders as the requisite impression. Adopting the view that Hume's priority principle is a causal hypothesis⁷ - and hence that the search for an impression, or the source of an idea, is the search for the cause of that idea⁸ - Stroud suggests that
Hume isolates two different candidates as possible causes of the idea of necessity - a determination of the mind to pass from the idea of one object to that of its usual attendant, and an impression or feeling of determination. If he says simply that the determination of the mind is what causes us to get the idea of necessity, then his 'first principle' would be violated, since he would have found an idea which is caused by something other than an impression. Therefore, he should say that the idea is caused by the impression or feeling of determination. (Stroud 1977: 85)

But not only should Hume assert that the feeling, as opposed to its associated determination, is the cause of the idea, Stroud intimates that this is how Hume in fact does see it. For Stroud goes on to explain how we ought to understand the presumably Humean suggestion that necessity is a particular feeling:

The impression or feeling of determination from which the idea of necessity is derived must therefore be understood as just a certain feeling that arises in the mind whenever a certain kind of mental occurrence causes another. (Stroud 1977: 85)

What are we to make of all this?

26. The first thing to notice about Stroud's argument is that it appears to contain a not very subtle shift from 'ought' to 'is'. Having told us what Hume ought to do, Stroud appears to conclude, on the basis of his 'should-discussion', that this is what Hume in fact does. I find this move puzzling, for surely one does not attempt to show what someone has done merely by appealing to what ought to be done. While it may be logically expedient for Hume to opt for the course of action Stroud advises, saying so still leaves unanswered the question whether this is the course that has been taken. So my first qualm is a methodological one on the procedure relied on by Stroud to substantiate his interpretation. In the second place, Stroud's argument for his interpretation seems to rest on a contentious, if not false assumption - namely, that Hume's so-called 'determination of the mind' cannot qualify as an impression. If it can, Stroud's rationale for his interpretation, that centres on the need not to infringe the priority principle, is undercut. That is to say, if Hume's determination of the mind qualifies as an impression, whatever the feeling of this determination might be, Hume would not be
contradicting his priority principle in suggesting that the source, or cause as Stroud puts it, of the idea of necessary connection is this determination. Clearly, the principal, if not final arbiter on these issues must be the text, so without further ado, let us turn to the Treatise.

27. As I see it, the text does not support Stroud's interpretation of Hume's view on the impression associated with the idea of necessity. If anything, it seems to corroborate the counter suggestion that Hume regards the determination of the mind as the source - and hence, given the priority principle, the impression - of the idea of necessary connection. A number of passages appear to support this suggestion of mine, but perhaps the most important in the Treatise is the following:

For after we have observ'd the resemblance in a sufficient number of instances, we immediately feel a determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant...This determination is the only effect of the resemblance: and therefore must be the same with power or efficacy, whose idea is deriv'd from the resemblance...Necessity, then, is the effect of this observation, and is nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another. (T 165, my emphasis)

While Hume does mention the presence of a feeling in this passage - 'we immediately feel a determination of the mind' - he says nothing more about it, and instead, focusses on the determination itself. For him, according to this passage, it is the determination - as opposed to the feeling of the determination - that is the source of the idea of power or efficacy. And as the last sentence above clearly indicates, in the Treatise Hume identifies necessity with a particular 'determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another'. But what about the possibility that Hume changed his mind on this issue between the completion of the Treatise and the composition of the Enquiry? Perhaps the Enquiry - that, as we saw earlier, is viewed by Hume as a better rendition of some of the positions held in the Treatise - has shifted ground on this issue, and adopted the thesis that Stroud asserted ought to be adopted. In short, does the Enquiry contradict my suggestion here? I do not think so.

28. Once again, in order to be succinct, I shall refer only to those passages I think are central to the issue. Towards the end of his Enquiry investigation into the source of the idea of necessary connection, Hume
draws the conclusion that

the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant, and to believe, that it will exist. This connexion, therefore, which we feel in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression, from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion. (E 75, my underlining)

Here we find Hume expressing a thesis that appears to be similar to that endorsed in the Treatise. Having made the observation that the mind feels that a connection exists between two perceived events, Hume goes on to suggest that it is the 'customary transition of the imagination', which we feel, that 'is the sentiment or impression' he is after. So here the sought for source, or cause of the idea of necessary connection, as with the discussion in the Treatise, does not appear to be a feeling, but some mental phenomenon that is felt. Which explains why Hume later wraps up his Enquiry analysis on the source of the idea of necessary connection with this remark:

When we say, therefore, that one object is connected with another, we mean only, that they have acquired a connexion in our thought, and give rise to this inference, by which they become proofs of each other's existence. (E 76, my underlining)

If the impression Hume is after is some feeling, as Stroud suggests, this explication would read differently. For then by 'necessary connection' we would not mean that the objects had 'acquired a connexion in our thought' - as Hume maintains above - but that a feeling of a connection had been acquired. But this latter suggestion is entirely excluded from Hume's explication above. All of which suggests, as I see it, that Stroud's interpretation does not square either with important passages from the Treatise or with central passages from the Enquiry. And given that Stroud fails to proffer any textual evidence for his interpretation, let alone any opposing textual evidence, from my analysis it appears that we can conclude that Hume's is a radical thesis on a specific determination of the mind, and not one on the feeling that is apparently associated with this determination. However, there is a second, and perhaps equally telling reason for rejecting Stroud's interpretation.
29. As Stroud sees it, Hume relies on the requirement that the priority principle not be contradicted in order to select the impression for the idea of necessary connection. Now according to Stroud, the decision to opt for the determination as the source of the idea would infringe this principle. Thus Stroud's interpretation appears to rest on the assumption that the determination Hume refers to cannot qualify as an impression. But the text suggests that Stroud's assumption here is false. For there is good evidence that Hume does view the determination of the mind that he is interested in as an impression, albeit an internal impression:

Necessity, then,...is nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another. (T 165, my emphasis)

But if necessity is a specific determination - as this extract and my preceding discussion suggests - and if it is nothing but an impression of the mind', the phenomenon that has been identified with necessity must be an impression. In that case, the assumption that Stroud appears to rely on for his interpretation is refuted. But this assumption appears to play an integral role in Stroud's argument against the suggestion that for Hume necessary connection is a determination of the mind. With this assumption out of the way, given the textual evidence cited above for the alternative reading, it appears that my interpretation of Hume's radical thesis is not only possible, but probable as well.10

30. The decision to view necessary connection as a specific determination of the mind has a number of ramifications, one of which ought to be mentioned here. It concerns Hume's application of the term 'perception'. The Treatise opens with an account of perceptions, and as Hume sees it, there are two types:

All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS...Those perceptions, which enter [the mind] with most force and violence, we may name impressions ; and under this name I comprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul. (T 1, my insert)

Now what appears to be Hume's proposal that we view the determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant as an impression,
strongly suggests that for him, this determination is a perception. But how
can this determination of the mind - for that matter, any determination -
qualify as a perception? For surely by 'perception' is meant some process,
whereby the mind operates on various phenomena or mental entities, such
as ideas. And while the designation 'determination of the mind' is not
especially perspicuous, it surely does not signify a process, but rather the
precondition or determinant of some process? That is to say, if by
'perception' is meant a mental activity, or as Locke put it, 'operation in the
mind' (Essay II (IX) 1), what appears to be Hume's decision to view a
specific determination of the mind as an impression, seems to commit him
to a view that infringes the conventional wisdom on perceptions: for now it
appears that Hume is mistakenly ascribing inactivity to (essentially active)
perceptions.

31. The crux of this objection is the view that an impression, as a
perception, is ipso facto a process. As it happens, however, Hume's con-
ception of perceptions, differs from that espoused here. Furthermore,
Hume knows it, and draws our attention to this specific issue. As the
following passage clearly indicates, Hume is well aware of his termin-
ological, and presumably conceptual, departure from the traditional
Lockean account of perceptions.

I here make use of these terms, impression and idea, in a sense
different from what is usual, and I hope this liberty will be
allowed me. Perhaps I rather restore the word, idea, to its
original sense, from which Mr. Locke had perverted it, in
making it stand for all our perceptions. By the term of impres-
sion I would not be understood to express the manner, in which
our lively perceptions are produced in the soul, but merely the
perceptions themselves: for which there is no particular name
either in the English or any other language, that I know of. (T
1: footnote 1, my emphasis)

In suggesting that the expression 'impression' does not designate a mental
activity, or process whereby the mind operates on its contents, but that the
expression instead refers to the contents themselves, Hume appears to be
suggesting that perceptions are (mental) entities, and not processes. Now
if Hume, in the extract above, is willing to talk about 'lively perceptions' (my
emphasis), he is surely also willing to talk about perceptions that are not
lively i.e. those that are faint, difficult to perceive, or - on the most
speculative note - still to be perceived. That is to say, perhaps Hume is
here implicitly sanctioning the possibility of unperceived perceptions. If so, this would suggest, as I see it, that for Hume, the term 'perception' can designate unperceived mental entities, such as an impression not yet perceived. But is this not at least part of the meaning of Hume's phrase 'the determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant'? That is to say, is this determination for Hume, for the most part, not an unperceived mental phenomenon, that can be activated under certain circumstances, and other things being equal, can make its presence known - through some feeling, perhaps, as Hume suggests? If so, it appears that, given Hume's characterization of perceptions, especially that of impressions, it appears that his proposal is that the determination of the mind he seems to identify with necessary connection can qualify as a perception. So if my interpretation is correct that the impression Hume selects as the source of the idea of necessary connection is a specific determination of the mind, given these comments on 'perception' and particularly 'impression', the implication appears to be that Hume is willing to sanction references to dormant perceptions. In that case, his implicit suggestion may well be that the impression for the idea of necessary connection is some elusive phenomenon, not readily accessible to researchers. As my subsequent discussion will make clear, there is something to be said for this latter inference. With these important points of clarification, and some speculation behind us, we can now return to a question raised earlier on the relationship between the two theses that constitute Hume's view on necessity. How does Hume characterize the relationship between the radical thesis on necessary connection and the weaker thesis on the source of the idea of necessary connection?

Section three: The relationship between the two components of Hume's view on necessary connection.

32. In the previous section of this chapter I attempted to show that Hume endorses a complex view on necessary connection. On the one hand, he appears to subscribe to a not particularly ambitious view on the source of the idea necessary connection. According to this thesis, as I argued above, the source of this idea is a specific determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant. On the other hand, Hume maintains that his is a radical, or paradoxical thesis on necessary connection itself - namely, that necessary connection simply is this determination of the mind. Thus it appears that Hume endorses a view on necessary connection that has both epistemological and ontological constituents: namely, a suggestion on the source of the idea of necessary connection, and a
proposal on necessity itself. And what is interesting - as we shall see - is that Hume relies on the arguments for one component of his view on necessary connection to support the other component. But if these are different types of theses - as they appear to be - how can arguments for one theory be relied on to defend another kind of theory? Without any clarification, these are likely to strike one as incongruent enterprises. In what follows I shall attempt to relate these components, and thus attempt to reconcile what may appear to be two disparate theses. So how does Hume view the relationship between these two theses?

33. While he does not explicitly address this issue, the evidence suggests that Hume regards the radical thesis as an inference from his thesis on the source of the idea of necessary connection. Referring to his candidate for the source of this idea - namely, the determination of the mind to pass from one object to another - Hume asserts that this 'specific determination is the only effect of the resemblance [we observe between pairs of conjoined objects]; and therefore must be the same with power or efficacy, whose idea is deriv'd from the resemblance'. (T 165, my insert and underlining) Admittedly, the presence of the conclusion indicator 'therefore' in this passage cannot be viewed as conclusive support for the suggestion that Hume views the radical thesis as an inference, or logical conclusion from his weak thesis. However, it is at least some evidence for this suggestion. And when we incorporate the following two important passages on this issue, as I see it, there can be little doubt that this is in fact how Hume sees the relationship between the two theses:

The several instances of resembling conjunctions lead us into the notion of power and necessity. These instances are in themselves totally distinct from each other, and have no union but in the mind, which observes them, and collects their ideas. Necessity, then, is the effect of this observation, and is nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another. (T 165, my underlining)

And again:

The idea of necessity arises from some impression. There is no impression convey'd by our senses, which can give rise to that idea. It must, therefore, be deriv'd from some internal impression, or impression of reflexion. There is no internal impression,
which has any relation to the present business, but that propensity, which custom produces, to pass from an object to the idea of its usual attendant. This therefore is the essence of necessity. (T 165, my underlining)

But if the underlined words in the above three passages do function as conclusion-indicators, as I am suggesting is the case, precisely how does Hume (purportedly) derive a (radical) thesis on necessity from the (weak) thesis on the source of the idea of necessity? For the inference, as it has been articulated in the Treatise, reads something like this:

\[ P_1: \text{The source of the idea of necessary connection is a specific determination of the mind. (Call this determination 'D_1'.)} \]
\[ \therefore \text{Necessary connection is this determination of the mind D_1.} \]

But this inference, as it stands, is clearly not valid. For unless the source of the idea of necessary connection is necessary connection, the categorical conclusion above does not follow logically from the stated premiss \( P_1 \). That is to say, Hume needs to endorse the suppressed premiss,

\[ P_2: \text{The source of the idea of necessary connection is necessary connection,} \]

in order to derive, from \( P_1 \), his thesis that necessary connection is the requisite impression. For unless he establishes \( P_2 \), the conclusion Hume is after can be false, even if premiss \( P_1 \) is true. Is there any evidence that Hume endorses the required premiss \( P_2 \)?

34. As the search for evidence to help settle this question clearly presupposes an understanding of premiss \( P_2 \), let me open the investigation of this issue with an attempt at explicating this fundamental thesis. As I see it, the premiss rests on answers to the following two questions:

(i) In the first place, we need to know what is meant by the claim that some idea is an idea of something or other. And as the suppressed premiss in Hume's inference involves the idea of necessary connection, we require a Humean explication of the specific claim that a particular idea is an idea of necessary connection.
(ii) Secondly, premiss \( P_2 \) trades on an understanding of the notion 'source'. So what does Hume mean by the suggestion that something or other is the source of an idea, specifically that of the idea of necessary connection?

To begin with, what has Hume to say on the first issue?

35. In his exposition on ideas, Hume insists on a fundamental distinction - namely, that between simple and complex ideas. I want to say a little on this distinction and then briefly consider Hume's views on the nature of the idea of necessary connection before responding to the issues raised by (i) and (ii) above. I think that it is advisable to follow this procedure because it appears that Hume's (likely) explication of the expression 'x is an idea of ...' is a function of his views on the nature of the idea in question. So unless we know what type of idea the idea of necessary connection is for Hume, we are not likely to come up with the appropriate Humean explication of the phrase 'x is the idea of necessary connection'. Having suggested that '[a]ll the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS' (T 1), Hume goes on to suggest that these perceptions can be recategorized along entirely different lines as well:

There is another division of our perceptions, which it will be convenient to observe, and which extends itself both to our impressions and ideas. This division is into SIMPLE and COMPLEX. Simple perceptions or impressions and ideas are such as admit of no distinction nor separation. The complex are the contrary to these, and may be distinguished into parts. Tho' a particular colour, taste, and smell are qualities all united together in this apple, 'tis easy to perceive they are not the same, but are at least distinguishable from each other. (T 2, my emphasis)

Unfortunately, this crucial passage is very confusing, and at best gives us only an obscure insight into the classification Hume is keen to establish. From this Treatise extract it appears that divisibility is the criterion for distinguishing between the two types of ideas. That is to say, if an idea can be divided into distinguishable components, or parts, for Hume it is a complex idea; if not, it is a simple idea. Take his example. Trading on an equivocation, if not identification of perceptions and external objects - there appears to be an implicit suggestion here that apples are mental
perceptions - Hume asserts that an apple is a composite of numerous qualities that can be distinguished from each other. In other words, my complex idea of some apple, as Hume sees it, can be divided into simple distinguishable components, each of which, it appears, corresponds to a constituent of the apple.

36. To illustrate his position, he considers three of the senses - sight, taste and smell. Suppose that I wanted to learn about the apple on my desk. By looking at it I discover something about its colour, by tasting it I realize how sweet it is, and by smelling it I learn about the apple's particular smell. In each case I perform an operation that reveals something about the apple i.e. I gradually enhance my knowledge of the properties of the apple. And it is because I relied on separate sensory faculties to acquire the components of my complex idea of the apple, I suggest, that Hume goes on to assert that 'it is easy to perceive [that the qualities of the apple] are not the same, but are at least distinguishable from each other'. (T 2, my insert) But if the qualities of the apple are not the same, given what appears to be an equivocation on certain perceptions and objects (and their qualities), the implicit suggestion appears to be that the different sensory faculties generate different components of the complex idea we have of the apple. So, as Hume sees it, some of our ideas are complex by virtue of the fact that they can be divided into distinguishable components, each of which has been generated by a different sensory faculty.

37. This account of complex ideas, based as it is on an appeal to the contributions different senses can make to our ideas, says absolutely nothing about the multitude of ideas we can form from any one of our senses. Is this to say that for Hume, our senses cannot, on an individual basis, generate complex ideas? If this is not Hume's intent, and he is willing to allow for complex ideas from individual faculties, precisely how are we to distinguish between the complex ideas that can be formed by one faculty, and those complex ideas that form from more than one faculty? Without the ability to discriminate between these two types of complex ideas, we may find it difficult, if not impossible to distinguish between the complex ideas that form from a particular sense, and the simple ideas produced by that faculty. For instance, consider some of the ideas that can be formed by the faculty sight. Given the account above, and his failure to elaborate on the issue, Hume surely does not want to suggest that we cannot acquire complex ideas of the colour of an object? For his intriguing, and controversial discussion of the (presumably simple) idea that can form on the missing shade of blue when there is no correspondent (presumably simple)
impression, is an implicit acknowledgement that one's idea of the colour blue at least consists of different, and presumably simple ideas of various shades of the colour blue. So if divisibility is the distinguishing characteristic of complex ideas for Hume, as I have suggested above, it seems that for Hume we can possess an idea of blue that is complex: constituted as it is by various different component ideas of this colour, each of which corresponds to a different shade of the colour blue. Which suggests that Hume accepts the view that our senses can, on an individual basis, generate both simple and complex ideas. But in that case, how does Hume propose we distinguish between the various types of complex ideas that can be produced by our faculties? For now the criterion that Hume relied on to distinguish between ideas - namely, divisibility - cannot discriminate between the complex ideas generated by one faculty, and those complex ideas generated by more than one faculty. Which suggests that the characterization Hume has given above of complex ideas is not exhaustive, and thus inadequate.

38. Equipped with this (loose) characterization of complex ideas, and by implication that of simple ideas, Hume proceeds to a thesis that will prove invaluable in our attempts to understand the claim that some idea is an idea of necessary connection. Maintaining that there is a 'great resemblance betwixt our impressions and ideas in every other particular, except their degree of force and vivacity' (T 2), and explicitly acknowledging the distinction between simple and complex ideas, Hume asserts of complex ideas and impressions that

'tho there is in general a great resemblance betwixt our complex impressions and ideas, yet the rule is not universally true, that they are exact copies of each other. (T 3)

For instance, suggests Hume, the complex idea New Jerusalem has never had impressions that correspond to it, and that of Paris, even though he has seen the city, does not 'perfectly represent all its streets and houses in their real and just proportions'. (T 3) However, while we cannot view all our complex ideas as exact copies, or representations of certain complex impressions, as Hume sees it, we can operate with this rule where simple ideas are concerned. That is to say, according to Hume, every one of our simple ideas is an exact copy or representation of an associated impression:

We may next consider how the case stands with our simple
perceptions. After the most accurate examination, of which I am capable, I venture to affirm, that the rule here holds without any exception, and that every simple idea has a simple impression, which resembles it; and every simple impression a correspondent idea. (T 3, my emphasis)

Or as he puts it more forcefully, further on in his discussion;

all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent. (T 4, italics Hume's)

By way of support for this bold thesis on simple ideas, Hume offers an example on the idea of red. The idea of red that we rely on when we think about something that is red - as we might do in the dark - for him, differs 'only in degree, not in nature' from that red impression that 'strikes our eyes in sun-shine' when we look at the red object. (T 3) Unable to produce a counter-example to the thesis, after inviting his readers to see if they can produce one, Hume concludes that the rule our ideas and impressions are resembling appears to hold without exception for simple ideas, but that it is not universally applicable to our complex ideas. We are now in the position - or so I think - to attempt a resolution of the issue raised earlier on the claim that some idea can be the idea of necessary connection.

39. While Hume does not say so explicitly, the evidence suggests that he views the idea of necessary connection as a simple idea. Support for this suggestion emerges from a consideration of Hume's responses to Locke's view on power. In his Essay concerning human understanding, John Locke had maintained that the idea of power is a simple idea: 'Power also is another of those simple ideas which we receive from sensation and reflection' (Essay II vii 8). Now when Hume rebuts Locke's view on the source of the idea of necessary connection in the Treatise, he objects that 'reason alone can never give rise to any original idea...(T 157, my emphasis). Admittedly the use of the word 'original' here need not signify 'simple'. But when we augment this extract with Hume's Enquiry comments on Locke's views on power, I contend that we have fairly strong evidence that Hume regards the idea of necessary connection as a simple idea:

Mr Locke, in his chapter of power, says, that finding from experience, that there are several new productions in matter,
and concluding that there must somewhere be a power capable of producing them, we arrive at last by this reasoning at the idea of power. But no reasoning can ever give us a new, original, simple idea; as this philosopher himself confesses. This, therefore, can never be the origin of that idea. (E 64, my emphasis)

Now if the idea of necessary connection is a simple idea for Hume, as I am suggesting is the case, the assertion that some idea is the idea of necessary connection, as Hume sees it, carries with it specific consequences. Given what Hume holds on simple ideas, the claim that some idea is the idea of necessary connection appears to amount to the assertion that the idea of necessary connection has an associated impression, and that this idea not only resembles, but that it is an exact copy or representation - at least in nature, if not degree - of this impression that is associated with the idea. Had this idea been a complex idea, the resemblance relationship between the idea and the impression that is its source might have been more complex and tenuous than is the case with any simple idea.

40. It is interesting to note that in his account of complex ideas, Hume does not explicitly preclude the possibility that some of our complex ideas do exactly resemble their complex impressions. Referring to the rule that all our ideas and impressions are resembling, in the Treatise all that Hume asserts is that where complex idea and impressions are concerned, 'the rule is not universally true, that they are exact copies of each other'. (T 3) As it stands, this assertion clearly leaves open the possibility that the rule is applicable to some complex ideas. So even if the idea of necessary connection is not a simple idea for Hume, as I am suggesting is the case, his decision to regard it as a complex idea need not necessarily undermine my suggestion on the likely Humean explication of the phrase 'x is the idea of necessary connection'. In that case, my suggested explication - that the claim that some idea is an idea of necessary connection amounts to the assertion that this idea is an exact copy or representation of an impression that is associated with the idea - would require additional argumentation to prove that the specific idea of necessary connection happens to be one of those complex ideas that obeys the rule. That is to say, it would need to be independently established that the (now presumably complex) idea of necessary connection does not infringe the rule, as far as Hume is concerned. Thus the refutation of my interpretation of Hume's views on the nature of the idea of necessary connection is not necessarily a refutation of my suggestion on the likely Humean explication of the phrase
'x is the idea of necessary connection'. For Hume has not denied that there could be complex ideas that exactly copy or represent associated impressions - and the idea of necessary connection may well be one of these exactly resembling perceptions.

41. All of which suggests, as I see it, that Hume's decision to view the idea of necessary connection as a simple idea - better, what appears to be his decision - preempts the need for additional argumentation to show that the idea of necessary connection is associated with a resembling impression. Now he can develop an account of necessary connection that need not be burdened by cumbersome qualifications on the possible nonexistence of the desired impression. However, there appears to be far more to this move for Hume, than mere considerations of convenience.

42. Besides preparing the way for a relatively straightforward account of necessary connection, the suggestion that the idea of necessary connection is a simple idea has more philosophically substantial benefits. Most important, this move - from Hume's point of view - makes it possible to now develop an account of necessary connection that possesses a characteristic he deems most desirable - namely, rigour. For now it is possible to develop an account of necessary connection that, in essence, is similar to the presumably rigorous theories already developed by science for some of the other alleged features of our universe, such as the secondary qualities of objects. In classifying the idea of necessary connection as a simple idea, Hume is aligning this idea with the presumably less obscure simple ideas of red, 'scarlet or orange, of sweet or bitter' (T 5), thereby bringing this metaphysical idea within the scope of the presumably less obscure theories relied on by the scientific community to account at least for the secondary qualities of objects. That is to say, if physics can provide a fairly precise account of certain properties - that ostensibly belong to external objects - according to which their secondary qualities, for instance, 'are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind' (T 469), the decision to view the idea of necessary connection as a simple idea, for Hume, greatly enhances the prospects of a more rigorous account of necessary connection. For if the assertion is that some idea is the idea of necessary connection, given that this idea is simple, the likely Humean explication of this assertion now makes it possible to identify the associated impression with some precision - for now there must be an impression of which the idea is an exact copy. And in that case, the intractable problem of necessary connection becomes more accessible. For as Hume sees it, a more precise framework can now be brought to bear on this problem - a problem, as I argued in the previous
chapter, that Hume views as fundamental to the problems discussed in the *Treatise*, and hence to philosophy, or metaphysics in general. 11

43. In his introduction to the *Treatise*, Hume decries the rampant uncertainty of the theories, or 'systems' as he puts it, of even the most eminent metaphysicians - a condition that, in his view, has unfortunately 'drawn disgrace upon philosophy itself'. (T xiii) As he sees it, the situation has deteriorated to such an extent that

even the rabble without doors may judge from the noise and clamour, which they hear, that all goes not well within. There is nothing which is not the subject of debate, and in which men of learning are not of contrary opinions. The most trivial question escapes not our controversy, and in the most momentous we are not able to give any certain decision. Disputes are multiplied, as if every thing was uncertain; and these disputes are managed with the greatest warmth, as if every thing was certain. Amidst all this bustle 'tis not reason, which carries the prize, but eloquence; and no man needs ever despair of gaining proselytes to the most extravagant hypothesis, who has art enough to represent it in any favourable colours. The victory is not gained by the men at arms, who manage the pike and sword: but by the trumpeters, drummers, and musicians of the army. (T xiv)

The *Treatise* and *Enquiry* accounts of necessary connection, intimates Hume, constitute an antidote to this debilitating condition. For if the speculative sciences, such as metaphysics, are fraught with controversy and uncertainty, as Hume clearly thinks is the case, given the centrality of the problem of necessary connection in metaphysics, the move to align the metaphysical idea of necessary connection with other simple ideas, such as our ideas of the secondary qualities of objects, can be viewed as integral to Hume's attempts to dispel the uncertainty (allegedly) endemic to metaphysics in general. In the process, intimates Hume, we would be transforming a significant segment of metaphysics into a decideable science. Which explains Hume's later depiction of this move as a 'discovery...[that] is to be regarded as a considerable advancement of the speculative sciences'. (T 469, my insert)

44. This brings me to the second issue raised earlier on the meaning of Hume's suggestion that something or other is the *source* of an idea. The
attempt by Hume to place the problem of necessary connection on a more rigorous footing - through the decision to view the idea of necessary connection as a simple idea - as I see it, manifests itself in Hume's reliance on the phrase 'source' to articulate his conception of the problem. Consider the following characterization of the problem. Operating with the view that the idea of necessary connection, or power 'is a new original idea, not to be found in any one instance, and which yet arises from the repetition of several instances', Hume goes on to assert that

the repetition alone has not that effect, but must either discover or produce something new, which is the source of that idea. Did the repetition neither discover nor produce any thing new, our ideas might be multiply'd by it, but wou'd not be enlarg'd above what they are upon the observation of one single instance. Every enlargement, therefore, (such as the idea of power or connexion) which arises from the multiplicity of similar instances, is copy'd from some effects of the multiplicity, and will be perfectly understood by understanding these effects. Wherever we find any thing new to be discover'd or produc'd by the repetition, there we must place the power, and must never look for it in any other object. (T 163, my underlinings)

It is important to note that this account of the problem of necessary connection is one that draws heavily on the concept effect. But this concept is the counterpart of the concept cause. Which suggests that Hume is drawing on a causal framework to articulate his conception of the problem of necessary connection. And in that case, his proposal that we view the phenomenon that is generated or produced by the repetition of several instances' as 'the source of' the idea of necessary connection, appears to amount to the suggestion that this generated phenomenon be viewed as the origin or cause of the idea of necessary connection. In short, the adoption of what appears to be a causal framework to articulate the problem of necessary connection, suggests that Hume places a causal interpretation on the phrase 'source'. As I see it, the following considerations confirm this suggestion of mine.

45. In his account of the priority principle, Hume explicitly asserts that our ideas are derived from or caused by our impressions. In order to prove the principle that all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions (T 4), he suggests that 'a new review' of his perceptions
is instructive, in that it reveals a constant conjunction between his simple ideas and their correspondent impressions. What is more, this association appears to hold over an indefinite number of instances. This constant conjunction, that allegedly holds 'in such an infinite number of instances', is significant, suggests Hume, because it 'can never arise from chance; but clearly proves a dependence of the impressions on the ideas, or of the ideas on the impressions'. (T 4/5) But which way does the dependence run? To settle this issue, Hume once again investigates some of his perceptions, and after observing that some of his ideas are preceded by associated impressions, he concludes that there is a causal relationship between our ideas and our impressions - a relationship such that our impressions cause our ideas:

The constant conjunction of our resembling perceptions, is a convincing proof, that the one are the causes of the other; and that our impressions are the causes of our ideas, not our ideas of our impressions. (T 5)

Thus it appears that there is a causal relationship for Hume between our ideas and their associated impressions. If I am correct on this issue, his later suggestion that we nominate the phenomenon that is produced by 'the repetition of several instances' of constant conjunctions as the source of the idea of necessary connection (T 163), appears to be nothing more than the suggestion that this generated phenomenon be viewed as the cause of the idea of necessary connection. In that case, it does appear that Hume places a causal interpretation on the phrase 'source', when he uses it to articulate his views on necessary connection.

46. Nevertheless, a word of warning must be issued here. While Hume is generally willing to extol the virtues of science, especially physics, in his quest for rigour, and often seeks solutions to philosophical problems from a scientific and explicitly causal point of view, we also have evidence that he has second thoughts about this practice. For instance, in a letter to Francis Hutcheson, written on the eve of the publication of the third volume of the Treatise, Hume writes as follows:

I must consult you in a point of prudence. I have concluded a reasoning with the following sentences:

*When you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing but that, from the particular 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 mighty advancement of speculative sciences, though like that too it has little or no influence on practice.

Is not this a little too strong? I desire your opinion of it, though I cannot entirely promise to confirm myself to it. I wish from my heart I could avoid concluding, that since morality, according to your opinion, as well as mine, is determined merely by sentiment, it regards only human nature and human life...(G 39/40, my underlining)

Can we infer from the sentiments expressed here that Hume is also concerned about the utility of science for metaphysics? Admittedly, this expression of unease arises out of Hume's speculations on morality, and not out of his analysis of the metaphysical problem of necessary connection. Thus we must be cautious in our attempts to extrapolate his views on the value of science for metaphysics from this passage. For his qualms on the role of science in morality - specifically Hume's qualms on science's, or as he puts it, modern philosophy's proposal that we view moral characteristics, such as vice and virtue, as subjective phenomena - on their own do not necessarily preclude the possibility that for Hume, science can be of unmitigated value for metaphysics. For all we know, Hume may think that the issues are logically separate, and ought to be treated as such. That is to say, Hume could continue to appeal to science in order to 'reduce' the ostensibly objective, but allegedly obscure discipline of metaphysics to a subjective and allegedly precise discipline, even after his admission that science has limited application in morality. Nevertheless, this passage does at least serve notice that Hume's is not an euphoric love affair with science. For it at least shows that Hume has reservations about the results science can generate out of the issues he is interested in, even when these results - on Hume's own admission - constitute 'a mighty advancement' for the speculative sciences.14

47. This now places us in the position - or so I think - to piece together a likely Humean explication of the suppressed premiss \( P_2 \), that has been relied on by Hume to infer his strong thesis on necessary connection. In the light of my analysis above, it appears that this is a *causal* proposition, or hypothesis on the origin of a specific simple idea. More particularly, it
appears that premiss P2 can be articulated as follows:

**P2a**: The cause of the simple idea of necessary connection is an impression that exactly resembles this idea, and this impression is necessary connection.

But what type of impression is associated with the simple idea of necessary connection? According to the priority principle, if the idea under consideration is a simple idea, its associated impression must be simple: 'all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions...'

(T 14, my underlining) And later on in the Treatise, in his analysis of necessary connection, Hume explicitly asserts that for any idea, '[i]f it be a compound idea, it must arise from compound impressions. If simple, from simple impressions. (T 157, my underlining) Given these views on the correlation between simple ideas and the impressions that are associated with them, we can take the above articulation (i.e. proposition P2a) one step further, and suggest that for Hume, premiss P2 can be even more precisely formulated as follows:

**P2b**: The cause of the simple idea of necessary connection is a simple impression that exactly resembles this idea, and this impression is necessary connection.

With this explication of premiss P2 behind us, it appears that we can now begin the critical evaluation of the arguments relied on by Hume in his attempts to establish his strong thesis on necessary connection. For we are now able to determine whether or not the suppressed premiss P2 is true, thereby contributing at least towards a decision on the soundness of Hume's arguments. The chapter that follows contains an evaluation of these arguments. However, I would like to consider a further important explicatory issue before engaging in an investigation of Hume's arguments for his strong thesis. This concerns the nature of the determination that Hume views as the source of the idea of necessary connection. For this specific determination, as we have just seen, for Hume is not only the source of the idea of necessary connection, but more importantly, is viewed by him as necessity itself. So, in order to understand his account of necessary connection, we need to know about this mental phenomenon. What then is this 'determination of the mind' that Hume has identified with necessary connection?
Section four: On the impression for the idea of necessary connection.

48. I have argued that the impression that Hume views as the source, or cause of the idea of necessary connection is a specific mental phenomenon: in the Treatise this impression is usually referred to as a specific 'determination of the mind'. And as I showed in the previous section of this chapter, Hume goes as far as to identify this particular determination of the mind with necessary connection. From this it follows that any attempt to acquire an adequate understanding of Hume's account of necessary connection must draw on some insights into his views on the nature of this determination of the mind. For this reason I want to take a closer look at this issue before articulating and assessing the arguments for Hume's views on necessary connection. So what has he to say on this mental phenomenon: the alleged impression for the idea of necessary connection?

49. In his editor's introduction to the Enquiry Selby-Bigge asserts that Hume is not 'shy of saying the same thing in different ways, and at the same time he is often slovenly and indifferent about his words and formulae'. (Selby-Bigge 1888: vii) The discussion on the impression for the idea of necessary connection appears to at least partially substantiate Selby-Bigge's charge, for it appears that Hume relies on a loose variety of expressions to refer to, and describe the sought for impression. In fact, it appears that the primary discussions of this impression in the Treatise and the Enquiry - namely those in section XIV, part III of Book I of the Treatise, and section VII of the Enquiry - together contain at least eleven major characterizations of the impression that Hume identifies with necessity. We need to consider them in some detail. I shall first list these accounts, and then go on to compare them with each other. In an effort to simplify matters, and in order to highlight what I take to be an important shift in Hume's position, I shall separate the Treatise versions from those in the Enquiry. To begin with, take the earlier Treatise accounts.

50. In the Treatise the impression that is postulated as the source of the idea of necessary connection, is alluded to on numerous occasions, and as the following eight extracts illustrate, Hume's phraseology varies quite significantly, even when the passages come from the same section:

C₁: '...after we have observ'd the resemblance in a sufficient number of instances, we immediately feel a determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant, and to
conceive it in a stronger light upon account of that relation'. (T 165)

C₂: 'Necessity, then,...is nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another'. (T 165)

C₃: 'There is no internal impression, which has any relation to the present business, but that propensity, which custom produces, to pass from an object to the idea of its usual attendant'. (T 165)

C₄: 'Either we have no idea of necessity, or necessity is nothing but that determination of the thought to pass from causes to effects and from effects to causes, according to their experienc'd union'. (T 166)

C₅: '...the necessity or power, which unites causes and effects, lies in the determination of the mind to pass from the one to the other'. (T 166)

C₆: '...how often must we repeat to ourselves, that...the repetition ['of any two objects or actions, however related'] neither discovers nor causes anything to the objects, but has an influence only on the mind, by that customary transition it produces: that this customary transition is, therefore, the same with power and necessity: which are consequently qualities of perceptions, not of objects, and are internally felt by the soul, and not perceiv'd externally in bodies'? (T 166)

C₇: 'When any object is presented to us, it immediately conveys to the mind a lively idea of that object, which is usually found to attend it; and this determination of the mind forms the necessary connexion of these objects. But when we change the point of view, from the objects to the perceptions; in that case the impression is to be considered as the cause and the lively idea as the effect; and their necessary connection is that new determination, which we feel to pass from the idea of the one to that of the other'. (T 169)
C8: '...when I consider the influence of this constant conjunction, I perceive, that such a relation can never be an object of reasoning, and can never operate upon the mind, but by means of custom, which determines the imagination to make a transition from the idea of one object to that of its usual attendant, and from the impression of one to a more lively idea of the other'. (T 170)

What are we to make of these eight Treatise renditions of the source of the idea of necessary connection? More importantly, what light, if any, do they throw on the phenomenon that Hume posits as necessary connection?

51. There can be little doubt that as they stand, these are not entirely equivalent accounts of the impression that Hume posits as the cause of the idea of necessary connection. While extracts C4 and C5 appear to be general statements about a determination of the mind to pass from causes to effects in any situation, the remaining extracts from this list appear to be about specific causal contexts. More particularly, each of the remaining extracts appear to be fairly specific statements about a particular, and usually different causal situation. Taking each of the extracts in turn, it appears that they are statements about a determination or propensity to pass either from

(i) 'one object to its usual attendant [i.e. presumably object]' (extract C1)

or (ii) 'an object to the idea of its usual attendant [i.e. presumably object]' (extract C3)

or (iii) one perception to another perception (extract C6)

or (iv) (a) 'any object...[to] a lively idea of [some attendant object]' (extract C7) (basically the same as (ii) above)

and (b) 'the idea of the one [causal impression] to [the idea] of the other [effected idea]'. (extract C7)

or (v) (a) 'the idea of one object to that [i.e. the idea] of its usual attendant' (extract C8)

and (b) 'from the impression of one [presumably object] to a more lively idea of the other [presumably object]'. (extract C8)

In other words - to put it more clearly - the eight passages appear to differ
both in terms of the scope of their assertions, and in terms of the nature of the extensions of their assertions. While extracts C4 and C5 seem to be general statements, in that they posit the existence of a psychological phenomenon that (allegedly) arises in causal contexts in general, the other passages from the Treatise appear to be more particular, in that they suggest that this phenomenon arises in the specific (apparently causal) situations that have been enumerated above, in (i) to (v). So the logical standing of the various statements appear to differ. However, the differences between these accounts are more marked than is suggested by the previous sentence - a difference that emerges most forcefully when we contrast the statements on these specific situations.

52. It appears that the particular contexts that Hume alludes to are radically different, judging from his accounts of them. For it appears that his discussion encompases talk about the following three different types of contexts:

(i) those contexts involving the interaction of objects only (e.g. extracts C1 and C2)
(ii) the contexts in which objects and perceptions interact (e.g. extract C3 and the first part of extract C7)
(iii) those contexts that involve the interaction of perceptions only (e.g. the second part of extract C7 and extract C8)

If I am correct here, it seems that Hume's Treatise suggestion on the impression posited as the source of the idea of necessary connection is rather complex: including as it does not only a broad suggestion on the determination of the mind that (allegedly) arises in causal contexts in general, but also the more specific suggestions on the three types of situations that one would need to monitor in order to learn about the impression. But what have we learnt from these passages about the impression itself? We need to consider this issue very carefully, for it will later prove to be the key to an adequate understanding of Hume's account of necessary connection.

53. What Hume has done in the Treatise - or so it appears from my analysis above - is merely provide us with a catalogue of contexts that we need to study to learn about the requisite impression. But nothing direct has been said about this elusive phenomenon. For other than labelling the impression with the denoting-phrase 'the determination of the mind to pass from one
object to its usual attendant' and the term 'propensity to pass from an object to the idea of its usual attendant', and obliquely suggesting that the referent or extension of these labels manifests itself in various causal contexts through some (presumably psychological) feeling, in the eight central Treatise extracts above, Hume has failed to make any specific assertions on the nature of the impression he boldly identifies with necessary connection. But these passages are from the section of the Treatise that contains the most extensive treatment of Hume's account of necessary connection, and if any section ought to say something about the impression posited by Hume as the source of the idea of necessary connection, it is surely this one! What then are we to make of this omission? Is this merely an inadvertent mistake by Hume, or is there more to this omission than meets the eye? Perhaps a consideration of Hume's discussion in the Enquiry will help account for this lacuna? Let us find out.

54. What is striking about the Enquiry discussion of necessary connection is the fact that Hume is even more reticent here than was the case in the Treatise. For now he offers even less assistance than in the Treatise to identify, and thus help determine the nature of the requisite impression. Unlike his earlier analysis, the supposedly more complete and elegant account of necessary connection in the Enquiry contains no catalogue of contexts in which the impression of necessity occurs. What is more, the obscure language relied on by Hume in the Enquiry to allude to this impression, exacerbates the task of isolating this impression from the other impressions. In opting for the phrase 'this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant' to refer to the requisite impression, in the Enquiry Hume is relying on an amorphous expression that, without further explanation, is unlikely to function as an adequate linguistic conduit to the sought for phenomenon. At least with the expressions that Hume relied on most frequently in the Treatise to name or refer to this (allegedly existent) impression - namely, 'the determination of the mind' and 'propensity' - we are equipped with expressions that possess a modicum of prima facie expiatory power. Consider the following three central passages from section VII of the Enquiry - by far the most complete of Hume's Enquiry attempts at providing an exposition on the source of the idea of necessary connection:

C9: '...after a repetition of similar instances, the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant, and to believe, that it will exist. This connexion, therefore, which we feel in the mind, this customary transition
of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression, from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion. (E 75)

C10: 'After he has observed several [constant conjunctions]...he then pronounces them to be connected. What alteration has happened to give rise to this new idea of connexion? Nothing but that he feels these events to be connected in his imagination, and can readily foretell the existence of one from the appearance of the other'. (E 75/6)

C11: '...when many uniform instances appear, and the same object is always followed by the same event; we then begin to entertain the notion of cause and connexion. We then feel a new sentiment or impression, to wit, a customary connexion in the thought or imagination between one object and its usual attendant...' (E 78)

As they stand, these are totally inadequate accounts of the impression that Hume identifies with necessary connection. In fact, as I read them, they do not even appear to be accounts of the impression: at best, they are oblique suggestions or hints about a specific context in which the impression occurs - namely, that context where the imagination engages in the process whereby it passes from one of its objects to another. Other than repeat his Treatise view that this impression manifests itself through some (presumably psychological) feeling, and suggest that the impression is the referent or extension of the amorphous phrase 'this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant', it appears that in the Enquiry, as with the Treatise, Hume provides no direct information on a phenomenon that plays such a central role in his account of necessary connection. Thus it appears that this (allegedly vital) impression remains an enigma. For it seems that neither the Treatise nor the Enquiry discussions on necessary connection provide us with any direct insights into the nature of this phenomenon. All of which raises an important question: given that this impression is the cornerstone of his view of necessary connection, why has Hume failed to provide any details of this mental phenomenon?

55. While Hume has not explicitly revealed why neither the Treatise nor the Enquiry contain direct accounts of this impression that he identifies with
necessity, likely Humean explanations for this omission can be constructed from various comments that he has made. I would like to formulate and discuss two explanations that Hume could have relied on. Consider the first, and perhaps the less convincing of the two possible reasons for the omission.

56. Towards the end of his introduction to the *Treatise* Hume suggests that researchers intent on establishing a science of man face a problem that is unique to their enterprise: namely, that their acts of speculation artificially modifies the (mental) phenomena to be explained. So much so, that the theories ultimately espoused by the moral philosopher, when elicited from the subjective phenomena under review, are likely to be uncertain and to be about phenomena different from those that motivated the investigation in the first place. As Hume puts it,

Moral philosophy has, indeed, this peculiar disadvantage, which is not found in natural, that in collecting its experiments, it cannot make them purposely, with premeditation, and after such a manner as to satisfy itself concerning every particular difficulty which may arise. When I am at a loss to know the effects of one body upon another in any situation, I need only put them in that situation, and observe what results from it. But should I endeavour to clear up after the same manner any doubt in moral philosophy, by placing myself in the same case with that which I consider, 'tis evident this reflection and premeditation would so disturb the operation of my natural principles, as must render it impossible to form any just conclusion from the phaenomenon. (T xviii/xix)

But if one cannot rely on subjective phenomena in order to formulate an appropriate adequate theory for the internal phenomena one is interested in - as Hume appears to be suggesting here - any attempt to provide an adequate account of the specific mental disposition that Hume identifies with necessary connection will be fraught with uncertainty. For if all speculations on mental phenomena 'would so disturb the operation of my natural principles, as must render it impossible to form any just conclusion from the phaenomenon' (T xix, my emphasis), any attempt to formulate adequate theories about Hume's mental disposition must be grounded on phenomena different from this disposition. But if we desire an adequate theory $T_1$ for $X$, and can only rely on $Y$, that is different from $X$, to
formulate the desired theory, it is highly unlikely that theory $T_1$ will be about $X$, let alone will be an adequate theory of $X$. Had we to deny scientists access to aardvarks when they attempted to formulate theories on these creatures, and only allowed them to construct their aardvark theories from their study of elephants, the resultant theories are not likely to be adequate theories about aardvarks - for all we know, these theories are unlikely to have any bearing at all on aardvarks. In short, Hume's suggestion could be that, given the problem of the modification of mental phenomena through speculation, the conclusions or theories that can be formulated of the internal impression of necessity will be highly speculative, and hence uncertain. Not rooted in the entity one is attempting to explain, these theories at best will be close approximations of the mental phenomenon one is researching. But Hume has little interest in uncertain theories of necessity, for the field is already littered with many competing theories of necessity that lack 'solidity or evidence'. (T 158) So Hume restrains the urge to speculate on this phenomenon, and does not formulate a theory on the mental disposition that he identifies with necessary connection.

57. There are problems with this explanation. Assuming that I have understood Hume's position correctly, and have depicted it accurately, the above account of the omission appears to imply a thesis that is false: namely, the view that theories can be formulated, or induced from phenomena alone. A crucial component of the above explanation centers around the following assertion:

But should I endeavour to clear up after the same manner any doubt in moral philosophy, by placing myself in the same case with that which I consider, 'his evident this reflection and premeditation would so disturb the operation of my natural principles, as must render it impossible to form any just conclusion from the phaenomenon. (T xix)

Here Hume appears to be arguing that his attempts to establish as certain any theory in moral philosophy - i.e. 'to clear up...any doubt in moral philosophy' - are hindered, if not made impossible by the modification of the mental phenomena he is speculating about. That is to say, Hume appears to be suggesting that true theories in moral philosophy are unlikely because their extensions change. And as I read it, the implication of this suggestion is that were these extensions not to change, that is to say, were they to remain constant throughout the process of theory formation, it seems true theories
could be formulated in moral philosophy. For now these theories could be extrapolated from the (unchanged) phenomenon. As Hume might have put it: had the phenomenon that the moral philosopher is interested in to remain the same through theory formation, as is the case for the natural philosopher, it would be possible to form a 'just conclusion from the phaenomenon'. But this implication of Hume's position - assuming that my reasoning above is correct - appears to be false, at least for the following reason.

58. If by the phrase 'just conclusion' is meant adequate, or perhaps even true theory - which appears to be the case, given the immediate context of speculations in natural and moral philosophy, and the issue of the certainty of these speculations - the implication above of the possible Humean explanation for the omission appears to amount to the suggestion that adequate or true theories can be induced from the observation of phenomena. But neither option holds. For the sake of clarity, suppose we draw a distinction between a theory and its observation sentences i.e. those sentences that are specifically about the phenomena observed, that are to be accounted for by the theory. Take any theory $T_a$. That theory will entail a number of observation sentences '$O_1, O_2, O_3...O_n$'. Now the logical nature of the entailment relationship between the theory and its observation sentences is such that the theory cannot be shown to be true on the basis of the truth of its observation sentences. For even if all of the observation sentences implied by a theory are shown to be true, the theory itself can still be false. As Quine puts it, 'theory can still vary though all possible observations be fixed'. (Quine 1970: 170) To suggest otherwise, as appears to be the case with the implication I have identified in the previous paragraph, is to commit the fallacy of affirming the consequent. But if a theory cannot be shown to be true, or conclusively confirmed by its observation sentences the following important possibility arises: two theories, that have the same implied observation sentences, may be logically incompatible with each other, even though all of their observation sentences are true.16 And in that case, the exclusive appeal to phenomena, whether modified or constant through theory formation, is illegitimate as an attempt to formulate an appropriate theory that is either true, or merely adequate - as opposed to inadequate - for the phenomena that motivated the investigation. In short, the entailment relationship between phenomena and conclusions would undercut what appears to be Hume's implied suggestion that one can form a particular 'just conclusion from the phaenomenon'. For the exclusive appeal to the phenomena can neither
establish true theories, nor enable us to discriminate in all cases between just and unjust theories.

59. All of which suggests that this possible explanation for Hume's failure to provide us with an account of the internal impression that he identifies with necessary connection is not entirely convincing. For this explanation, as I have argued above, appears to imply a false thesis on the relationship between theories and their extensions. But with neither an account of the mental phenomenon boldly identified with necessity, nor an explanation for the omission of this account, we are likely to be unmoved by Hume's pronouncement that his views on necessity are paradoxical.\footnote{For then Hume's radical thesis on necessary connection - that turns out to be silent on a crucial issue - appears to rest on an inadequate foundation. So what Humean resources remain to account for Hume's omission? Unless a convincing Humean explanation can be constructed, given Hume's failure to provide us with a theory specifically on the mental phenomenon that he has identified with necessary connection, Hume's declaration on the absurdity of his views on necessity is likely to strike one as exaggerated, if not altogether idle. As I see it, at least one major candidate remains to explain this omission - a possible explanation that draws on remarks made by Hume in his *Enquiry*. We need to explore this option both because it can be viewed as an implicit attempt by Hume to anticipate this objection to his *Treatise* discussion of necessary connection, and because this second explanation highlights an issue that will feature prominently in the fourth chapter - namely, the role of Hume's views on rigour in attempts to develop an account of necessary connection.}

60. Once again, while Hume's second discussion on necessary connection does not contain an explicit defence of his failure to theorize directly on the nature of the impression he identifies with necessity, it at least does contain material that bears directly on the issue - material that can be used to construct a likely Humean explanation for the omission. Certain remarks in the *Enquiry* suggest that Hume is at least aware of the need to account for the apparent lacuna in his *Treatise* account of necessary connection - even if he fails to translate this awareness into an explicit explanation. Furthermore, these remarks appear where we would expect them to appear: namely, in the section devoted to Hume's account of necessary connection. With the previous explanation, this was not the case - as we saw - for the material relied on there came from Hume's cursory remarks made in his introduction to the *Treatise*. The following statement from the *Enquiry* is especially pertinent: 'We have no idea of this connexion; nor
even any distinct notion what it is we desire to know, when we endeavour at a conception of it. (E 77) If this categorical assertion is true, given other theses that Hume appears committed to, direct speculations about the requisite impression are bound to encounter some serious difficulties. And as I see it, Hume would view these problems as issues that could vitiate the proffered accounts of the impression. So he refuses the lure, and remains silent. Let me explain.

61. As has already been pointed out - in Chapter One, and in the previous section of this chapter - the priority principle is fundamental to Hume’s enterprise. As I argued, this thesis, that postulates an exact resemblance between simple ideas and their associated simple impressions, is a cornerstone of Hume’s attempt to ‘introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects’. (T xi) As Hume sees it, this principle can be relied on to dispel the uncertainty and confusion allegedly endemic to numerous discussions in metaphysics and philosophy, thereby aiding in the transformation of major segments of these disciplines to rigorous verifiable sciences. For in Hume’s view, impressions are all strong and sensible:

They admit not of ambiguity. They are not only placed in a full light themselves, but may throw light on their correspondent ideas, which lie in obscurity. (E 62)

So if a term has an associated simple idea, but this idea is obscure and uncertain, given the priority principle and Hume’s views on the determinateness of impressions, in order to fix the precise meaning of the term associated with the obscure idea, we at least need to determine the nature of the apparently determinate impression associated with this idea. With this precision, verifiability is presumably not far behind, for the determination of the specifics of the idea associated with the term - through the determination of the specifics of the related impression - at least prepares the way for a rigorous determination of the truth-value of the assertion that contains this purified term. Now it is important to realize that the priority principle can generate rigorously verifiable assertions only if the problematic term already has an idea associated with it. For this thesis cannot be used to create ideas - impressions do that - but only to clarify those ideas already in existence. But Hume is adamant that when it comes to causal contexts, and especially to speculations about possible necessary connections between phenomena that seem to be causally interrelated, ‘[w]e have no idea of this connexion...’ (E 77) This can be viewed as an attempt by Hume to suggest that no rigorously verifiable
assertion about the extension of 'connexion' or any of its synonyms can be formulated. And as the presence of assertions that cannot be rigorously verified could vitiate the objective of the Enquiry and Treatise to transform metaphysics and philosophy into a more rigorous discipline, in these texts Hume refrains from theorizing on the impression he identifies with necessary connection. In the words of a recent philosopher, where rigorous explications of the impression of necessary connection are concerned, 'what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence'. (Wittgenstein 1974: 151) As my subsequent analysis will make clear - especially in the last chapter, where I consider Hume's predilection for clarity and rigour - there is a lot to be said for this explanation of Hume's failure to theorize on the nature of the impression he identifies with necessity. For the moment, however, let us set this issue aside and turn to a consideration of Hume's defence for his view on necessary connection. How then does Hume arrive at his thesis that necessity 'is nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another'? (T 165)

Notes.

1. That Hume freely interchanges the terms from this 'nearly synonimous' list is perhaps most graphically illustrated by the following interim summary of his Treatise discussion:

   Thus upon the whole we may infer, that when we talk of any being, whether of a superior or inferior nature, as endow'd with a power or force, proportion'd to any effect, and suppose, that this connexion depends upon an efficacy or energy, with which any of these objects are endow'd; in all these expressions, so apply'd we have really no distinct meaning, and make use only of common words, without any clear and determinate ideas. (T 162, last emphasis Hume's)

2. There are distinct parallels here with Quine's assessment of attempts to explicate 'analyticity'. A major component of Quine's argument rests on the view that the terms usually relied on to explain this term are synonymous and no more illuminating than, i.e. as obscure as 'analyticity' -
and how can one rely on a pool of unsatisfactory synonymous terms to explicate an equally unclear term? As he says, when referring to attempts to explain analytic statements in terms of self-contradictoriness: 'the notion of self-contradictoriness...stands in exactly the same need of clarification as does the notion of analyticity itself. The two notions are the two sides of a single dubious coin'. (Quine 1953: 20)

3. In his autobiography, written only months before his death, Hume referred to this desire of his for a literary reputation: 'Even my Love of literary Fame, my ruling Passion, never soured my humour, notwithstanding my frequent Disappointments'. (F 7)

4. Perhaps the most famous manifestation of Hume's concern for style can be found in the advertisement to his Enquiry, where he states that the Treatise has been 'cast anew' in order to correct 'some negligences in [the] former reasoning and more in the expression'. (E 2, my insert and emphasis)

5. These dates come from Eric Steinberg. See his edition of the Enquiry. (E xx, footnote 1.)

6. For a comprehensive discussion of Malebranche's influence on the philosophical community, especially that of the British community, see Charles J. McCracken Malebranche and British Philosophy, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1983). As McCracken points out, besides Berkeley's 'keen - if sometimes hostile - interest in the views of Malebranche...Locke, Hume, Reid, and a host of lesser British thinkers of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries read Malebranche's Recherche de la verite with particular care'. (McCracken 1983: vii)

7. '[O]ne must remember that [Hume] puts forward his 'general maxim' [i.e. the priority principle] that simple ideas are derived from simple impressions as a straightforward causal hypothesis'. (Stroud 1977: 34, my inserts) (For more on this interpretation by Stroud, see his Hume, Chapter Two, especially 21-35.)

8. '[A]ccording to the theory of ideas the cause or source of every idea is an impression...' (Stroud 1977: 80, my insert)

9. Is this to say that Hume is reifying a process here? For impressions are presumably mental entities of some sort, and if the amorphous phrase
'customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant' is to be viewed as an expression that refers to, or even names an impression, as Hume appears to be suggesting here, it seems that a transition, or process, is to be viewed as an entity. Or is this awkward characterization of the impression perhaps a manifestation of Hume's inability to describe the impression with precision? If so, why is there this inability? I have more to say on this issue in section four of this chapter, when I take a closer look at some issues that concern the nature of this impression that Hume is interested in.

10. If the source of the idea necessary connection is some psychological disposition, as I have argued against Stroud, and not some feeling, what function does Hume's references to feeling play in his analysis? Unfortunately, Hume is silent about the nature of this feeling that supposedly arises in causal contexts, and to the best of my knowledge, nowhere explains its role in his account of necessary connection. Which suggests that comments on this issue are likely to be highly speculative. For what it is worth, here is one thought on the subject. Perhaps Hume's comments on the issue - as expressed, for instance, in his Enquiry assertion that in causal contexts we 'feel' a new sentiment or impression...'(E 78), with the emphasis on 'feel' - can be read as a proposal that we become aware of the source of the idea of necessary connection through some (primitive?) non-intellectual process, and not as the result of any prior, carefully executed reasoning? If so, the feeling functions as a manifestation or sign of the psychological disposition that is the true source of the idea of necessary connection. But to repeat: given the highly speculative nature of this issue, as I see it, the question on this feeling must remain open.

11. This move by Hume to recast the metaphysical problem of necessary connection along more rigorous lines, is dealt with in some detail in the final chapter, when I consider the background to Hume's views on necessary connection.

12. Stroud has suggested that many critics have not fully appreciated the causal nature of Hume's analysis of the idea of necessary connection, and hence of the idea of causality. As he sees it, 'most commentators have not taken Hume to be primarily interested in giving a causal explanation of the origin of the idea of causality'. (Stroud 1977: 259)

13. This need not be viewed as an illegitimate move by Hume. His attempt
to understand the idea of necessary connection by seeking out, and subsequently investigating its cause, can be viewed as circular only if Hume endorses the view that the notion necessary connection in fact is an integral component of causality. But none of his (infamous) definitions of causality, that follow his *Treatise* and *Enquiry* analyses of necessary connection, make any mention of necessary connection. So if we understand Hume's search for the cause of the idea of necessary connection as merely the quest for some phenomenon contiguous and antecedent to the idea of necessary connection - without the additional demand that this phenomenon be necessarily connected to the idea of necessary connection - as well we might, we need not regard Hume's investigation as circular, and thereby fundamentally flawed from the outset.

14. Larry Laudan has made the bold claim that 'it is difficult to find a major philosopher between Socrates and G.E. Moore who knew less than Hume about the science of his time!' (Laudan 1981: 84) Whatever the merits of this assertion - and I am not in the position to assess it - there can surely be little doubt that Hume is correct in his supposition that the scientists of his day pursued rigour more tenaciously than did the (past and current) metaphysicians interested in the problem of necessary connection.

15. As I argued towards the end of the first section of this chapter, Hume depicts the *Enquiry* as a more rounded and lucid text than the *Treatise*. The advertisement for the work, remember, puts it like this: the *Enquiry* is a text that has been cast anew; 'where some former negligences in [my] former reasoning, and more in the expression, are [I hope] corrected'. (E 2, my insert)

16. This possibility Quine has labelled 'the thesis of underdetermination'. (See Quine 1970: 171)

17. In the *Treatise*, Hume proclaimed that 'I am sensible, that of all the paradoxes, which I have had, or shall hereafter have occasion to advance in the course of this treatise, the present one is the most violent, and that 'tis merely by dint of solid proof and reasoning I can ever hope it will have admission, and overcome the inveterate prejudices of mankind'. (T 166)

18. This procedure appears to trade on the assumption that clarity and determinateness are the handmaidens of truth. Or as Descartes might have put it, 'whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true'. (Descartes 1969: 76) In his *Hume*, Anthony Flew has recently drawn
attention to these apparent Cartesian overtones of Hume's analysis. (See his first chapter) As I shall argue in the fourth chapter, Hume's concerns over clarity are fundamental to his enterprise, for they underly his adoption of the priority principle, and thus constitute a cornerstone of his approach to the problem of necessary connection.
CHAPTER THREE

Hume's arguments for his views on necessary connection

1. In the Treatise Hume refers to the problem of the nature of the idea of necessity as one 'of the most sublime questions in philosophy'. (T 156) And as it turns out, this sublime problem elicits a response from Hume that is more than its equal - a solution so paradoxical, according to Hume, 'that 'tis merely by dint of solid proof and reasoning I can ever hope it will have admission, and overcome the inveterate prejudices of mankind'. (T 166) As I argued in the previous chapter, Hume appears to endorse a radical thesis on necessity, according to which necessary connection is not some external phenomenon, but a specific determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant. The time has come for us to consider the 'solid proof and reasoning' relied on by Hume for his controversial view on necessary connection.

2. Now Hume rests this bold thesis on two, and for him related, major considerations: one on the source of the idea of necessary connection, the other on an assessment of the semantic standing of his rivals' theories. We need to explore the characteristics, relationship and adequacy of these supports that form the basis of Hume's radical thesis on necessary connection. As I hope to demonstrate below, the foundation of this thesis is suspect. Not only are there blemishes with the arguments Hume relies on to defend his thesis, but more importantly, Hume's attempt to erect a new account of necessary connection appears to be fundamentally flawed in that it draws on a methodology that is questionable. To begin with, take Hume's arguments on the source of the idea of necessary connection.

Section one: Hume's search for the source of his metaphysical ideas.

3. Section VII of the Enquiry contains an extended argument on the source of the idea on necessary connection. This, undoubtedly, is the most complete of Hume's discussions on the issue.¹ So, for the most part, I shall
confine my critical analysis of this component of Hume's defence of the radical thesis on necessary connection to this section of the Enquiry. However, where necessary, I shall draw on non-Enquiry contributions from Hume on the issue as well. What then is Hume doing in section VII of the Enquiry?

4. After a brief introduction, Hume identifies the project of section VII of the Enquiry: to determine the meaning of some central terms from metaphysics, and thereby, hopefully, strip away some of the obscurity associated with those terms. Hume spells out his objective as follows:

There are no ideas, which occur in metaphysics, more obscure and uncertain, than those of power, force, energy or necessary connexion, of which it is every moment necessary for us to treat in all our disquisitions. We shall, therefore, endeavour, in this section, to fix, if possible, the precise meaning of these terms, and thereby remove some part of that obscurity, which is so much complained of in this species of philosophy. (E 40)

So Hume is after a rigorous explication of certain metaphysical terms. And in order to determine the precise meaning of these metaphysical terms, Hume proceeds to search for the source or the impressions associated with his ideas of power, force, energy and necessary connexion. In his analysis Hume considers five options on the source of his metaphysical ideas, and rejects four of them. We need to evaluate Hume's assessment of each of these suggestions. As I shall attempt to show, the argument for the suggestion that Hume ultimately accepts on the source of the metaphysical ideas he is interested in appears to be inadequate.

5. The first suggestion that Hume considers on the source of his metaphysical ideas can be spelt out as follows:

S1: These metaphysical ideas - in particular that of necessary connection - are due to the observation of a single instance of an external (i.e. non-mental) object interacting with another. (see E 41)

Hume dismisses this suggestion on two counts. In the first place, as he sees it, when we observe one object interacting with another, all that we observe is that one event follows the occurrence of another - but the power apparently responsible for the production of the second event allegedly escapes our
observation. More importantly, in a situation like this, Hume asserts that the mind of the observer remains totally nonplussed by the observed events: 'The mind feels no sentiment or inward impression from this succession of objects [i.e. events]'. (E 41, my insert) So when one billiard-ball strikes another, to use his example, apparently no (inward) impression of power is made on the mind of the observer - at best, only outward impressions form of the objects. But these impressions, at best, are only of the sensible qualities of the objects perceived, and not of the power allegedly responsible for the interaction of the objects. In the light of this Hume concludes his first objection to suggestion $S_1$: 'Consequently, there is not, in any single, particular instance of cause and effect, any thing which can suggest the idea of power or necessary connexion'. (E 41)

6. It is important to notice that Hume is not merely saying that the idea of power or necessary connexion does not arise in situations like that described above. His is a stronger claim. He thinks that he has established that it is not possible for the idea of power or necessary connexion to arise in any situation where a single instance of cause and effect involving external objects has been observed. But why does he stick his neck out so far? An answer to this important question can, I suggest, be found if we recap Hume's views on the relationship between ideas and impressions, as articulated in his priority principle.

7. According to Hume's priority principle, whenever one has a thought, one has ideas, and these ideas, in every case, are traceable to prior impressions:

   It seems a proposition, which will not admit of much dispute, that all our ideas are nothing but copies of our impressions, or, in other words, that it is impossible for us to think of anything [i.e. have the idea of that thing], which we have not antecedently felt, either by our external or internal senses. (E 41, my emphasis and insert)

But if the existence of an idea presupposes the occurrence of a preceding corresponding impression, the failure of an impression to form entails that the corresponding idea cannot form either. However, if this explanation is correct, it exposes a central issue in Hume's argument in the paragraph above: namely, the adequacy of the view that an inward impression of power cannot form from the observation of a single instance of cause and effect i.e. from one observation of these events. So a question arises: what
8. One plausible response to this question is to say that it appears that there is no argument here for this (second) strong claim. For there seems to be no explicit attempt by Hume to show that the inward impression of power associated with the idea power cannot be formed from the observation of a single instance of cause and effect. All that Hume has done, continues this response, is to merely assert that no inward impression of power occurs - he has not explicitly argued for the stronger claim that no impression of power can occur at all. For all that we find on the issue is the following statement from Hume: 'The mind feels no sentiment or inward impression [of power] from this succession of objects'. (E 41, my insert) Which leaves untouched the stronger thesis that the mind cannot feel any sentiment or inward impression of power, and entirely overlooks the thesis that no inward impression of power can form. From this it seems that Hume has not argued against the possibility that an inward impression of power can form from the observation of a single instance of cause and effect. And given the fact that there are no explicit references to the issue in the text here, it appears that Hume has simply failed to even explicitly consider this possibility.

9. Should this last comment be correct, it would threaten, if not entirely undermine Hume's argument against the suggestion, i.e. statement S₁, that his metaphysical ideas arise from the observation of a single instance of external objects interacting with each other. However, rather than pursue the question whether or not this comment is correct, let's consider the second reason cited by Hume for subscribing to his view about suggestion S₁. For we shall see that Hume's second reason for rejecting S₁ happens to contain the core of a response to the objection raised in the previous paragraph.

10. Hume rejects suggestion S₁ because his metaphysical idea of power or energy does not, and apparently cannot, arise directly from the observation of any sensible object. According to him, power is not listed in the inventory of the sensible properties of an object:

The scenes of the universe are continually shifting, and one object follows another in an uninterrupted succession; but the power or force, which actuates the whole machine, is entirely concealed from us, and never discovers itself in any of the
sensible qualities of body. (E 42)

Therefore, if the direct observation of an object can only reveal something of its sensible properties, and if power is not a sensible property, the power that actuates that object must remain concealed from us. As Hume puts it bluntly: 'It is impossible, therefore, that the idea of power can be derived from the contemplation of bodies...' (E 42).

11. The truth of this last statement clearly presupposes that power is not a sensible property. Now in the Enquiry, Hume does not explicitly assert that power is not a sensible property or quality. All that he maintains is that an inventory of the sensible properties of an object does not list power or energy. Two of the more explicit references to this issue are these:

a) '...there is no part of matter, that does ever, by its sensible qualities, discover any power or energy...' (E 42)
b) '...the power or force, which actuates the whole machine, [of the universe] is entirely concealed from us, and never discovers itself in any of the sensible qualities of body'. (E 42)

Do quotations a) and b) above support the view that for Hume, power is not a sensible property? Clearly, on a strict reading they do not - for neither passage rules out the possibility that power is some, as yet undiscovered sensible property. However, a more charitable reading of these two quotations will not only prove beneficial for Hume's argument above, but will also prepare the way for a response to the objection raised earlier that Hume has neither considered nor argued against the possibility that an inward impression of power can form from the observation of a single instance of cause and effect. For if power is not a sensible property, the observation of an object cannot directly result in the formation of an impression of power. And as ideas are dependent on the prior existence of impressions, given that the idea of necessary connection is a simple idea, if an impression of power cannot form, no idea of power can form from this source either. So the objection can be dealt with, provided Hume in fact does subscribe to the view that power is not a sensible property. Of course, if he does subscribe to the view, one might respond by asking whether he has any good argument for the claim. But for present purposes, we will press neither the interpretive nor the philosophical point further. We will simply assume that Hume does subscribe to the thesis that power is not a sensible property of an object, and note that on this assumption, the observation of a single instance of cause and effect in external objects
cannot result in the formation of the metaphysical idea of power, because no corresponding internal impressions of power can form from this observation. That is to say, suggestion $S_1$ is false for Hume, because no internal impression of power can form from the single observation of causally interacting external objects.

12. With this first suggestion out of the way, Hume turns his attention to a second:

$S_2$: We acquire the metaphysical ideas in question - in particular that of necessary connection - by considering the influence of our will over either the organs of the body or the faculties of the mind.

In Hume's own words:

This idea [of power], then, is an idea of reflection [that] arises from reflecting on the operations of our own mind, and on the command which is exercised by will...over the organs of the body...(E 42, my inserts)

And later:

Shall we then assert, that we are conscious of a power or energy in our minds, when, by an act or command of our will, we raise up a new idea, fix the mind to the contemplation of it, turn it on all sides, and at last dismiss it for some other idea, when we think that we have surveyed it with sufficient accuracy? (E 44)

Take the first disjunct of $S_2$. We clearly do exercise a good deal of influence over our bodies. For instance, I might decide to move my right arm across the table and place it near a cup I intend to pick up. This is one occasion, among many, where 'the motion of our body follows upon the command of our will'. (E 42) For Hume, we learn about this influence of the will over the body through experience. More importantly, this knowledge can be acquired only from one source: 'this influence...can be known only by experience'. (E 42) And as with the observation of objects, where the power actuating them is concealed from us, so with the will and its influence over the body - the power or energy responsible for the move-
ment of the organs of the body remains hidden:

The motion of our body follows upon the command of our will...But the means,...the energy, by which the will performs so extraordinary an operation...must for ever escape our most diligent enquiry. (E 42/3)

Hume cites three reasons for this view - reasons, as I shall argue below, that all stem from the same source: namely, Hume's conviction that the human understanding is weak and ignorant. If I am correct on this score, this would mark the introduction of a second, not unrelated, yet more embracing line of reasoning in his search for the source of his metaphysical ideas. For Hume's objections against the first suggestion $S_1$, as we have seen, rest on a specific view of the constitution of objects - namely, the view that power is not a sensible property. These can then be characterized as ontological objections. On the other hand, the objections to the second suggestion $S_2$ - as we shall soon see - have a different orientation in that they are epistemologically grounded. But this is not to suggest that there are no connections between the two sets of objections from Hume. Far from it. For the latter presuppose the ontology espoused by the initial set of objections. More specifically, while the second set of objections explicitly concern the capacity of the individual to know anything about the power allegedly responsible for the behaviour of an object, particularly that of the movements of the human body, they clearly rest on Hume's prior articulated view that power is not a sensible property. What then are the reasons cited by Hume for rejecting the first disjunct of $S_2$?

13. His initial objection to the first disjunct of $S_2$ involves an appeal to the mind/body problem. More particularly, Hume appeals to the intractability of the mind/body problem as a reason for denying that we can be conscious of power, and on this basis rejects $S_2$. As Hume sees it, no power or energy reveals itself when the mind considers (or reflects on) the operation of the soul's will on the organs of the body. For the source (allegedly) responsible for the will's influence over the body 'must for ever escape our most diligent enquiry'. (E 43)

14. Consider this example. While driving to campus, I see a stop sign and apply my car's brakes. The movement of my leg, and the depression of the brake-pedal take place as a result of various perceptions I have had, as
well as the occurrence of a specific will or intention on my part to stop the car opposite the sign. But while I may be conscious of the road, the sign, the car, my body and the brakes, I am not conscious of any power or force whereby my mind willed by body to behave in a particular way. As Hume might put it, we can accept that the motion of my body 'follows upon the command of my will'. But in this, and other instances like it, the means whereby my will activates my braking foot, remains a mystery. And as the principle that governs the 'union of soul with body' is one of nature's most mysterious, 'the power, by which this whole operation [of the interaction of soul and body] is performed,...is, to the last degree, mysterious and unintelligible'. (E 44, my insert) And this view, for Hume, suggests that we are not, and in fact will never be in the position to learn about the power attributed to the will that activates the organs of the human body. In the second place, Hume appeals to the (allegedly) inexplicable phenomenon that not all organs of the body can be influenced by the will e.g. while the will has influence over the tongue and fingers, it lacks this influence 'over the heart or liver'. (E 43) Had we known what power is, and in particular known what the power of the will is, we would have been able to account for the apparent limitations of the will over the organs of the body. But we presumably are unable to account for these limitations. For we are unable to explain why the will's influence 'reaches precisely to such boundaries, and no farther'. (E 43) And as he sees it, the failure to provide this account implies that we lack knowledge of the power of the will. Thirdly, and finally, Hume appeals to the difficulties of explaining the processes whereby the influence of the will works its way through the various parts of the body to eventually actuate the relevant organ of the body as a reason for rejecting suggestion $S_2$. These processes, a complex succession of causal events, for Hume are totally 'mysterious and unintelligible', involving as they do 'certain muscles, and nerves, and animal spirits, and, perhaps, something still more minute and more unknown'. (E 44) Given all these difficulties, Hume closes his case against the first component of suggestion $S_2$:

We may, therefore, conclude from the whole...that our idea of power is not copied from any sentiment or consciousness of power within ourselves...[T]he power or energy by which [the will influences the organs of the body], like that in other natural events, is unknown and inconceivable. (E 44, my inserts)

15. There is no need to go into his arguments against the second
component of suggestion $S_2$. While Hume's second set of arguments pursues a different thesis to that of the first - the thesis on the alleged power of the will over the mind's faculties, as opposed to the earlier thesis on the power of the will over the organs of the body - both sets of arguments center on the maxim that the internal impressions associated with the idea power prove evasive for the researcher. Whether the situation is one where the soul controls the body, or where the soul controls various mental faculties, the outcome remains the same: namely, the source of the idea of power proves evasive. In fact, Hume himself acknowledges that his reasons for rejecting the second component of $S_2$ are similar to those raised against the first component: 'I believe the same arguments will prove that even this command of the will gives us no real idea of force or energy'. (E 44/5) So the outcome of Hume's assessments of both components amounts to the same thing: whether we consider the influence of the will over those organs of the body that can be activated by the mind, or its influence over the faculties of the mind, we are not aware of the power others posit as the source for this influence. In both cases, the power that others claim is there, 'is entirely beyond our comprehension'. (E 45)

16. Hume's response to suggestion $S_2$ raises a few questions, especially the following one. Throughout his attack on this suggestion the following theme, or versions of it, emerge: the power or energy that the will has 'must forever escape our most diligent enquiry'. (43, my emphasis) But what precisely does this claim mean, and how does Hume propose to defend it? We have seen that for Hume, the knowledge we have of the influence of the will can be acquired 'only by experience'. (42, my emphasis) But if experience has shown that the human understanding has not previously been able to comprehend the nature of this influence, and that currently (i.e. at the time of writing the Enquiry), the nature of this influence is viewed as 'mysterious and unintelligible', what justification is there for the view that this state of ignorance will continue in the future? For we need to remember that Hume did not simply say that we do not know what power is, but went further and claimed that the power or energy of the will 'must forever escape our most diligent enquiry'. (E 42/3, my emphasis) If Hume is making a contingent claim on mankind's inability to acquire knowledge of this power - and this can be interpreted to be his position, given his reliance on the phrase 'forever', with its attribution of a temporal dimension to the claim - then further argumentation is called for to justify his projection of the past and current state of ignorance to the future.
On the other hand, even if we do not endorse this reading of Hume's claim, and suggest that it is an analytic assertion - similar, for instance, to 'Round squares must forever escape our most diligent search' - further argumentation for the claim is still called for.

17. Unfortunately, Hume has not, to the best of my knowledge, provided us with the means to decide on the appropriate interpretation of his claim. Furthermore, it appears that he has failed to provide us with a justification for the claim, irrespective of the interpretation we may decide on. And given Hume's views on the difficulties involved in extrapolating the future from one's experiences of the past and present - views that manifest themselves in numerous places in his writings, not least of which is his discussion later on in Part II of section VII of the Enquiry - the defence of this projection is unlikely to emerge at all. Which suggests that his charges against suggestion S_2 are incomplete, at best, if not inadequately supported. Does Hume's attack on the third, and final suggestion on the source of the metaphysical idea of power fare any better? I think not, as the following considerations attempt to make clear.

18. As Hume is not explicit about the third suggestion concerning the source of his metaphysical ideas, the interpretations we develop of his position here must be viewed as speculative. For while part 1 of section VII of the Enquiry concludes with a criticism of occasionalism, when we contrast this criticism with the objective Hume set himself earlier on in this section of the Enquiry, it is not at all obvious precisely what thesis it is he wants to refute. Nevertheless, the following extract, I think, contains the ingredients required for a plausible articulation of the third suggestion dismissed by Hume. After a brief exposition of occasionalism, we find this passage, expressing a view allegedly attributable to the occasionalists:

Our mental vision or conception of ideas is nothing but a revelation made to us by our Maker. When we voluntarily turn our thoughts to any object, and raise up its image in the fancy; it is not the will which creates that idea: It is the universal Creator, who discovers it to the mind, and renders it present to us. (E 47)

This passage is ostensibly about the generation of thoughts or ideas of objects. However, it would be consistent with the sentiments expressed here, and with those in the rest of his discussion of occasionalism, to suggest that for Hume the occasionalist would extend the views expressed
here to those on the generation of ideas on the energy or power of objects i.e. on the ideas of the qualities of objects. In that case, the (occasionalists' alleged) view is not only that the universal Creator creates our ideas of objects, but that he also is the source of our ideas on the power we (erroneously, as it happens) attribute to the objects. If I am correct here, the following appears to be the suggestion Hume sets up, to reject:

\[ S_3: \text{God is the source of the metaphysical idea of necessary connection, presumably through the implantation, by Him, of impressions in our minds.} \]

After a preliminary discussion on the origins of occasionalism - a discussion that emphasises the heuristic value of the theory - it appears that Hume indirectly dismisses suggestion \( S_3 \) for three reasons. Let us consider each of them.\(^8\)

19. Hume appears to level one theological and two 'more philosophical' objections at occasionalism, with the implication, presumably, that a criticism of this theory simultaneously constitutes a criticism of suggestion \( S_3 \). In the first place, Hume maintains that occasionalism, if true, would not be compatible with the contemporary conception of God, in that it entails a diminution of his power and wisdom. Where God's power is concerned, for instance, 'it argues surely more power in the Deity to delegate a certain degree of power to inferior creatures, than to produce every thing by his own immediate volition'. (E 47) As the contemporary conception of God presumably takes precedence over that entailed by occasionalism, presumes Hume, occasionalism itself must be rejected. And the demise of this view presumably brings with it the rejection of suggestion \( S_3 \) as well.

20. Clearly, there is a lot involved in this attack on \( S_3 \). Not least of which are the following issues: What is occasionalism?; Is Hume's conception of this view correct?; Is this a valid argument against occasionalism?; And what precisely is the relationship between Hume's argument here and suggestion \( S_3 \)? For instance, it is worth noting the prominence accorded the contemporary conception of God in Hume's criticism of occasionalism. Now why does Hume have so much (apparently uncritical) faith in the contemporary conception of God? Might this conception not be false? As things stand in section VII of the Enquiry, it certainly does look as though Hume has ridden roughshod over these, and other important issues.
Whether they are dealt with with more care elsewhere, is a question that must remain open, for the moment at least. However, perhaps his 'more philosophical' objections raise less dust than this one?

21. Hume's criticisms of suggestion S₂, as we saw earlier, rested on his view that the human understanding was weak and ignorant. This conviction emerges again in Hume's attack on suggestion S₃. For a central criticism he raises is that the occasionalists have overestimated the capabilities of the human intellect. In particular, Hume is of the opinion that the central thesis of occasionalism - that God is the real cause of all the events we denominate as causal - is a thesis that non-philosophers would find extraordinary, implausible, and generally 'quite beyond the reach of our faculties'. (E 48) This unfortunate predicament exists, despite the fact that the occasionalists' central thesis could be the result of a logically acceptable line of reasoning:

Though the chain of argument, which conduct to it, were ever so logical, there must arise a strong suspicion, if not an absolute assurance, that it has carried it quite beyond the reach of our faculties, when it leads to conclusions so extraordinary, and so remote from common life and experience. (E 48, my emphasis)

Irrespective of the ability of the intellect to generate arguments that can be viewed as 'ever so logical', a point is soon reached - as with the occasionalist's theories on God's power - where the human mind, encumbered with its frailties, is unable to assess the theses inferred by the intellect. This inability of the human mind to pass judgement on these ambitious theories ultimately leads to their downfall among enlightened thinkers sufficiently apprized of mankind's limitations. For these theories will fail to convince these thinkers, thereby (presumably) falling into disrepute.

It seems to me, that this theory of the universal energy and operation of the Supreme Being, is too bold ever to carry conviction with it to a man, sufficiently apprized of the weakness of human reason, and the narrow limits, to which it is confined in all its operations. (E 49/50)

So, as Humes sees it, the moral to be drawn from this discussion is clear:
as lesser mortals, we are simply not capable of fully understanding, and thus precluded from accepting, let alone adhering to the occasionalists' central theses. Viewing 'common life and experience' as the touchstone of the ordinary, and speaking for mankind, Hume finds occasionalism, especially the central theses of this view, 'extraordinary' and incomprehensible, and by implication unacceptable. But what does he mean by this?

22. Is Hume saying that he finds the theses of occasionalism incomprehensible, unverifiable, or beset with some other problem? He is not explicit on this point, and as I read him, appears to vacillate on the issue. On the one hand he claims, in a presumably derogatory manner, that, given mankind's intellectual shortcomings, one is soon 'into fairy land' with occasionalism. But what precisely does Hume mean with this cryptic remark? To me this suggests that for Hume, the occasionalists' theory is so fantastic that it has totally departed from reality, and has thus escaped the checks and counterbalances of the world as experienced by non-philosophers. On the other hand, a few sentences on he claims that with this theory one is soon 'entirely out of the sphere of experience', despite all efforts on our part to maintain a reasonable degree of verisimilitude, presumably between the initial propositions of the occasionalist's theory and experience. Now this suggests that for Hume the theory cannot be verified - for the 'immense abysses' between the occasionalist's theory and 'common life and experience' surely precludes verification. What then is Hume's assessment of the occasionalist's theory: is it fantastic or unverifiable? Both? Or perhaps something else? Given that the material here is so inconclusive, I suggest that we cannot settle the matter one way or the other. So it appears that while it is clear that Hume is here resurrecting his view that the human intellect is weak, what is not clear is Hume's view on the precise nature of the impact of this weakness, where the assessment of occasionalism is concerned.

23. The second 'more philosophical' objection to suggestion $S_3$ fares a little better than the first, in that Hume leaves us with fewer loose ends. Hume invokes his priority principle on ideas and impressions against $S_3$: 'all our ideas are nothing but copies of our impressions'. (E 41) The occasionalists claim that God is the real power behind causally interacting phenomena. But if this is true, precisely how did they acquire this philosophical idea that God is the power behind the motions of the 'causally' interacting phenomena? That is to say, where do these meta-ideas on God's power
come from? Surely, suggests Hume, the occasionalists themselves must be the source of these ideas. For where does the idea of God come from, wonders Hume? As God cannot be observed, the idea of God must surely be the product of our own introspections:

We [i.e. the occasionalists and the rest of us] have no idea of the Supreme Being but what we learn from reflection on our own faculties. (E 48, my insert)

So any idea we may have on some characteristic of this Being, say that on the power of this God, must also be the product of our own introspections. But when they reject the thesis that matter is the source of our idea of power or necessary connection, the occasionalists give prominence to the view that the human mind is weak, and consequently unable to comprehend the forces others postulate as present in matter. So are we any better off where God and his powers is concerned, wonders Hume. Given that the idea of God and his powers is the product of our own introspections, continues Hume, are we not equally ignorant of the power allegedly possessed by God? For all that we have is direct access to our ideas of God and His powers - and unfortunately, no access at all to God Himself. Which suggests that for Hume, the occasionalists both want to eat, and keep their cake. For they want to deny man's ability to know about the power attributed to some external phenomena, namely matter, and yet maintain that knowledge of other external phenomena is attainable i.e. they accept that knowledge of God's power is attainable. Therefore, if the occasionalists want to stress mankind's mental weakness and insist that matter is not the source of power or necessary connection, they ought to accept, by the same token, that God is not the source either:

Were our ignorance, therefore, a good reason for rejecting anything, we should be led into that principle of denying all energy in the Supreme Being as much as in the grossest matter. We surely comprehend as little the operations of one as of the other. (E 48)

But if we are as ignorant of the alleged powers in God as we are of the alleged powers in matter, why persist, as the occasionalists do, with the view that God is the power responsible for causally interacting phenomena? Surely, intimates Hume, the one thesis is as overly ambitious as the other. For when the occasionalists deny the need to resort to views on power in matter to explain the behaviour of causally interacting
phenomena, and turn to views on God's powers for their causal explanations, are they not still resorting to the unknown in an attempt to 'explain' the unknown?

We are ignorant, it is true, of the manner in which bodies operate on each other...But are we not equally ignorant of the manner or force by which a mind, even the supreme mind, operates either on itself or on body? (E 48)

In short, the occasionalists mistakenly endorse a thesis that is as open to criticism as the competing thesis on power in matter. For unfortunately, whether it is the power of objects or that of God that we are dealing with, as Hume sees it, 'all we know is our profound ignorance in both cases'. (E 48)

24. These objections to occasionalism constitute the final stage of the negative phase of Hume's Enquiry investigation of views on the source of the idea of necessary connection. Summing up his extensive search for the evasive source of the idea with the observation that '[w]e have sought in vain for an idea of power or necessary connexion, in all the sources from which we could suppose it to be derived'(E 49), Hume concludes on a note many philosophers are bound to find disturbing:

upon the whole, there appears not, throughout all nature, any one instance of connexion, which is conceivable by us. (E 49)

So much for all those raucous metaphysical speculations complained of early in the Treatise, that culminated in 'the systems of the most eminent philosophers'. (T xiii) For those disputes, as Hume derogatorily characterizes them, that are 'managed with the greatest warmth, as if every thing was certain', for Hume, turn out to be little more than exercises in futility. (T xiv) Much ado about nothing 'conceivable by us'.

25. Now from this can we go as far as to conclude that there is no idea of necessary connection, and that discourse on power or necessary connection is meaningless? We might be tempted to draw this extreme conclusion, suggests Hume. For if we endorse the priority principle, the failure to discover a source for the (purported) idea of necessary connection is likely to foster the suspicion that there is no idea of necessary connection to begin with:
All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another; but we never can observe any tie between them. They seem conjoined, but never connected. And as we can have no idea of any thing, which never appeared to our outward sense or inward sentiment, the necessary conclusion seems to be, that we have no idea of connexion or power at all, and that these words are absolutely without any meaning, when employed either in philosophical reasonings, or common life. (E · 49, Hume's emphases)

However, Hume warns against the adoption of this extreme suggestion that the idea of necessary connection lacks an impression, as is intimated by the above passage. The italics on 'seems' here cannot be overemphasized. In resorting to the clause 'the necessary conclusion seems to be...', with the stress on 'seems', Hume appears to be drawing attention to the tentative nature of a conclusion that we might be tempted to draw from our failure to discover one conceivable instance of connexion. Now Hume clearly could have made this point without the italics on 'seems'. But the fact that he takes the extra step to stress this word in his discussion is surely significant. For it appears to signal a (strong) cautionary note from Hume against opting for the most obvious conclusion suggested by his preceding analysis. That is to say, Hume appears to be suggesting here that we do not need to conclude that the idea of necessary connection has no antecedent impression because an impression for the idea has not yet been discovered. According to Hume, there is an alternative to the conclusion one might be tempted to draw from the failure to discover a conceivable connexion:

And as we can have no idea of any thing which never appeared to our outward sense or inward sentiment, the necessary conclusion seems to be that we have no idea of connexion or power at all, and that these words are absolutely without any meaning, when employed either in philosophical reasonings or common life.

But there still remains one method of avoiding this conclusion, and one source which we have not yet examined. (E · 49/50, last emphases mine)

Furthermore, not only does Hume suggest that there is an alternative to the obvious conclusion one might be tempted to adopt, he later goes on to tell us what this alternative is:
This connexion, therefore, which we feel in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion. (E 50)

In short, contrary to the conclusion one might be tempted to draw, Hume thinks that the idea of necessary connexion has an impression - what Hume in the *Enquiry* refers to as the 'customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant'. Or as Hume puts it elsewhere, perhaps more forcefully, the idea of necessary connection is associated with an internal impression: namely, a particular psychological propensity, or determination of the mind:

The idea of necessity arises from some impression. There is no impression convey'd by our senses, which can give rise to that idea. It must, therefore, be deriv'd from some internal impression, or impression of reflexion. There is no internal impression, which has any relation to the present business, but that propensity, which custom produces, to pass from an object to the idea of its usual attendant. This therefore is the essence of necessity. (T 165)

Reluctant to accede to the bleak prognosis that the idea of necessary connection lacks an impression, Hume persists with his search for the source of the idea of necessary connection. This perseverance pays off, for Hume eventually finds the requisite impression in a field hitherto undisturbed: in the natural propensities of the mind. For Hume maintains that the idea of necessary connection has a source, or impression causally responsible for its existence: namely, that specific determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant. Assuming that my arguments there for this interpretation are acceptable, precisely how does Hume arrive at this positive proposal of his on the source of the idea of necessary connection? Resting his views on an analysis of situations where predictions are made, Hume's reasoning - which is rather complex and tortuous at times - proceeds along the following lines.

26. Consider the contexts in which we make predictions. Without experience, suggests Hume, 'it is impossible for us, by any sagacity or penetration, to discover, or even conjecture...what event will result from the presence of 'any natural object or event'. (E 50, my emphasis) For instance, take the example of a mosquito bite. Unless I had experienced a
mosquito bite, my observation of a mosquito biting my arm cannot animate any predictions I may want to make about this bite, or any other mosquito bites. However, continues Hume, when we are able and do engage in speculations about the future, we do so by virtue of our ability to draw on a particular type of sensory experience: namely, that set of experiences that arises from the observation of the constant conjunction of phenomena. But why do we rely on this specific type of experience for our predictions, and not draw on other forms of sensory experience? For instance, why not base our predictions on the observation of 'one instance or experiment, where we have observed a particular event to follow upon another'? (E 50) If a single observation of a mosquito bite cannot animate my prediction that it will itch, can I not conclude that my next mosquito bite - and for that matter, all mosquito bites - will itch, given that the one just experienced itched? No, suggests Hume. For it is 'justly esteemed an unpardonable temerity to judge of the whole course of nature from one single experiment, however accurate or certain'. (E 50) Thus generalizations about mosquito bites are logically illegitimate, because they involve an unwarranted extrapolation from observed to unobserved phenomena. Irrespective of the accuracy or certainty of the experimental data that informs the generalization, it is illegitimate to rely on this data in order to draw inferences about the future i.e. about phenomena still to be observed:

Even after one instance or experiment, where we have observed a particular event to follow upon another, we are not entitled to form a general rule, or foretell what will happen in like cases'. (E 50)

Nevertheless, continues Hume, we persist with the practise of making predictions. Our logical sensibilities notwithstanding, we continue to extrapolate future events from the observation of current or past events. However, it is not the case that any random set of current or past events is relied on for our extrapolations. No: for we find that when we do predict, we draw on our observations of exceptionless constant conjunctions. That is to say, for Hume, our experiences of certain uninterrupted regularities in the universe animate our conjectures about the future:

when one particular species of event has always, in all instances, been conjoined with another, we make no longer any scruple of foretelling one upon the appearance of the other, and of employing that reasoning, which can alone assure us of any matter of fact or existence. (E 50)
In other words, as Hume sees it, we are compulsive predictors. Given any specific experience of various constant regularities in the universe, 'we make no longer any scruple of foretelling one [event] upon the appearance of the other'. (E 50, my insert) Or as he put it earlier in the Enquiry, we continue to draw inferences about the future, even though these inferences have not been, and cannot be logically sanctioned. For we find that a person

immediately infers the existence of one object from the appearance of the other. Yet he has not, by all his experience, acquired any idea or knowledge of the secret power, by which the one object produces the other; nor is it, by any process of reasoning, he is engaged to draw this inference. But still he finds himself determined to draw it: And though he should be convinced, that his understanding has no part in the operation, he would nevertheless continue in the same course of thinking. (E 28, my emphasis)

This urge, or determination to draw inferences about the future - an ineluctable disposition to predict that is set in motion by an individual's experiences of constant conjunctions - for Hume, is the basis for some of our fundamental views on the nature of reality. For it is the presence of this specific determination of the mind that not only accounts for the pervasive practise of 'foretelling one [event] upon the appearance of the other', but that also encourages individuals to postulate the existence of powers in external objects - whether they be attributed to material objects, or God himself. From this Hume concludes that our willingness to both classify particular events (or objects) as either cause or effect, and to postulate that one of them has a power to generate the other, is neither directly founded on reason, nor observation, but is rooted in this specific determination of the mind. Thus it is the presence of this mental determination that accounts for the practice of calling 'the one object, Cause; the other, Effect'. We suppose, that there is some connexion between them; some power in the one, by which it infallibly produces the other, and operates with the greatest certainty and strongest necessity'. (E 50) However, while we suppose this connection, all that we can be sure of is the presence of the mental disposition and its role in our speculations. All of which suggests, as Hume sees it, that the direct source of the idea of necessary connection is not some observed phenomenon, nor some carefully executed reasoning, but an instinctive internal mechanism of the mind to associate various events. As he puts it elsewhere, the source, or impression for the idea of necessary
connection is some latent natural mental phenomenon that is 'a species of natural instincts, which no reasoning or process of the thought and understanding is able, either to produce, or to prevent'. (E 30)

27. The discovery that the direct source of our idea of necessary connection is not some external phenomenon, but a particular internal impression, has momentous consequences, according to Hume. On the one hand, as he sees it, this conclusion has ramifications for the language relied on to articulate views on the metaphysical idea of necessary connection. For now we realize that the language that was used to express the views encapsulated by suggestions S1-3 above relies on expressions that are associated with suspect ideas. More specifically, these metaphysical expressions are associated with ideas that are 'very uncertain and confused':

As to the frequent use of the words, Force, Power, Energy, &c. which every where occur in common conversation, as well as in philosophy; this is no proof, that we are acquainted, in any instance, with the connecting principle between cause and effect, or can account ultimately for the production of one thing by another. These words, as commonly used, have very loose meanings annexed to them; and their ideas are very uncertain and confused. (E 52, my emphasis)

Or as he forthrightly puts it in the Treatise,

[with] all these expressions, so apply'd, we have really no distinct meaning, and make use only of common words, without any clear and determinate ideas. (T 162, my insert and underlining)

However, this is not all. For the outcome of the analysis that the direct source of our metaphysical idea of power or necessary connection is some internal mental disposition, and not some postulated power, apparently also has ramifications for views on the scope of human knowledge. Well, at least for Hume, that is. For he asserts the following after the presentation of his positive views on the source of our metaphysical idea of necessary connection:

No conclusions can be more agreeable to scepticism than such as make discoveries concerning the weakness and narrow
limits of human reason and capacity. And what stronger instance can be produced of the surprising ignorance and weakness of the understanding, than the present? (E 51)

Put briefly, from a (positive) thesis on the subjective origins of one of our metaphysical ideas, Hume ultimately generates two (negative) theses: one on the semantic standing of those accounts that postulate the existence of powers, the other a thesis on the limitations of the understanding.

28. This suggests that for Hume at least, there is far more at stake in attempts to erect an account of necessary connection than the mere identification of the source of the idea of necessary connection. For it now emerges that what is also at issue for him, is both the status of the language relied on to articulate views on this metaphysical idea, and perhaps equally important, the ability of the understanding to acquire knowledge of the universe and its qualities, especially powers. But do we want to accept these sceptical conclusions? More specifically, do we want to accede to the view that Hume has succeeded in demonstrating that the understanding is weak, at least where powers are concerned, and that the language relied on by metaphysicists and others who postulate the existence of necessary connections or powers is semantically deviant, as he suggests is the case?

29. No. Or so it seems. For both these bold theses rest squarely on Hume's account of the source of his metaphysical idea of power or necessary connection, and this account appears incomplete as it stands. While Hume's may be a viable suggestion on the source of the metaphysical idea necessary connection, what still needs to be established, according to this response, is that this is either the only, or else the best, of possibly many other viable suggestions. For Hume relies on the process of elimination in his search for the source of these metaphysical ideas, as we have seen: a procedure that requires the specification of all options in order to be successful. But it appears that Hume has failed to show that he has exhausted the possibilities in his analysis. For he has not explicitly indicated that no other options can be contemplated. So perhaps his positive view on the issue is not the final suggestion after all. Put it another way. Hume still needs to demonstrate that the source that he has identified for these metaphysical ideas is the one and only possible source of these ideas. Until Hume demonstrates that this source is the source of these ideas, his account must, at best, remain incomplete. Now unfortunately, it appears that Hume has failed to establish his additional required thesis in the Enquiry - the most extensive, and thorough of his discussions on the
issue. Therefore, while Hume might be correct in suggesting that neither matter, God, nor reflection is the source of our ideas of power or necessary connection, it remains to be seen whether the determination of the mind that Hume has specified as the source of the idea of necessary connection, is the only viable source of this metaphysical idea. In short, it appears that Hume still needs to show that the idea of power, or necessary connection has only one source.

30. Furthermore, it remains to be seen whether this additional requirement can be met. Can Hume determine that some specific idea - say the metaphysical idea of power or necessary connection - has a unique source? For the attempt to establish that a particular source is the only source for an idea clearly presupposes that it is possible for an idea to have a unique source. And if Hume is willing to endorse this presupposition, as is implicit in his analysis of the competing suggestions on the source of the idea of power, he must surely explain why some ideas can have more than one source, while others - such as the idea of necessary connection - can have a unique source. For instance, Hume's discussion of the idea that can form of a particular shade of blue, even though the related impression has not been experienced yet, is surely an acknowledgement - albeit an implicit one - that there are instances where either reflection or sense impressions can be the source of an idea. In other words, is Hume's discussion of the shade of blue example not an acceptance that some of our ideas can have more than one source? But if Hume is willing to accede to the suggestion that the idea of a particular shade of blue can have more than one source - as surely he must, given his acknowledgement that this idea is a distinct possibility - he needs to account for the distinction between this idea, and other ideas like it, and the idea of necessary connection, if he wants to maintain that the latter idea has a unique source. Without an adequate response to these basic questions, we need not accept Hume's positive thesis on the source of the idea of necessary connection. And in that case, the (allegedly) associated issues on the semantic standing of the language of necessary connection, and the sceptical stance towards the postulation of powers must remain open. That he remains silent on these issues is perhaps an indication of the enormity of the task involved, and a tacit acknowledgement by Hume that the task is difficult, if not impossible to accomplish.

31. However, it appears that Hume is not merely suggesting that his is yet another proposal on the source of the idea of necessary connection, as is assumed by this objection. For it seems that Hume's position is that the
the idea of necessary connection, can have no other source than the one he has identified. The reasoning for this interpretation is a little intricate. Alluding to his analysis of his rivals' views on power, or necessary connection, Hume asserts that

[w]e have sought in vain for an idea of power or necessary connexion, in all the sources from which we could suppose it to be derived. (E 49, my italics and underlining)

But if, after an analysis of various widely held theories on necessary connection, we conclude that none of the possibilities that we are able to conceive contain the sought for source of the idea of necessary connection - as Hume appears to be suggesting here - we are likely to infer, continues Hume, that this idea can have no source. From this - given the priority principle, and the view that the idea of necessary connection is simple - we might be tempted to draw the conclusion that the idea of necessary connection does not - if not cannot - exist. For the failure to discover the source of the idea in all the hitherto conceivable places, argues Hume, suggests that 'there appears not, throughout all nature, any one instance of connexion, which is conceivable by us'. (E 49, my emphasis) And without a conceivable source at our disposal, as I pointed out earlier, Hume muses that 'the necessary conclusion seems to be, that we have no idea of connexion or power at all...' (E 49, Hume's emphasis) Nevertheless, Hume himself maintains that the consideration of his rivals' views on power does not exhaust the possibilities. For he categorically asserts that

there still remains one method of avoiding this conclusion [i.e. 'that we have no idea of necessary connexion or power at all, and that these words are absolutely without any meaning'], and one source which we have not yet examined. (E 50, my insert and emphasis)

But how can Hume both report on the futility of the investigation of 'all the sources from which we could suppose [the idea of necessary connection] to be derived' (E 49), and subsequently assert that 'there still remains...one [promising] source which we have not yet examined' (E 50, my insert)? For if all conceivable sources fail us, there surely can be no further pregnant sources? But for Hume a fruitful source for the idea of necessary connection remains to be explored: namely, a specific determination of the mind. All of which suggests, as I see it, that Hume holds that the idea of necessary connection does have a conceivable source, but that this is a source that
becomes conceivable only when we relinquish the theories endorsed by his rivals, and adopt a different type of conceptual framework. For when Hume relies on his rivals' theories of necessary connection, no source for the idea of necessary connection is conceivable, according to him. However, when one adopts a different kind of conceptual framework, especially one that is more dynamic in its orientation to phenomena, focussing on the outcome of the repetitive interaction of similar instances rather than on the (static) single instances themselves, the evasive source 'reveals' itself to the investigator. So Hume is intimating that the endorsement of an entirely different point of view can prove to be revealing, for now the source becomes conceivable, and thus can be found. In short, access to the source for the idea of necessary connection, according to Hume, is made possible only through the radical shift of vision induced by the adoption of a new type of theory on necessary connection.11

32. Now Hume also draws on a second, different set of arguments to prepare the way for his account of necessary connection. Besides the reasoning above to encourage us to view the metaphysical theories of his rivals as epistemologically restrictive devices, that need to be supplanted by his, presumably more enlightening account of necessary connection, Hume also relies on different set of arguments to undermine the semantic standing of these rival theories. For as he sees it, theories that posit the existence of objective powers are semantically deficient. We need to critically explore this second indictment of Hume's rivals' positions.

Section two: Hume's semantic assessment of his rivals' theories.

33. In both his *Treatise* and *Enquiry* discussions of necessary connection, David Hume accepts that his is one of many rival accounts. In fact, in the *Treatise* he laments the proliferation of these diverse accounts, and goes as far as to suggest that this diversity is itself a reliable indication that these competing accounts are unacceptable:

In this research we meet with very little encouragement from that prodigious diversity, which is found in the opinions of those philosophers, who have pretended to explain the secret force and energy of causes....All these sentiments...are mix'd and vary'd in a thousand different ways; and form a strong presumption, that none of them have any solidity or evidence. (T 158)
As we saw in the previous section of this chapter, in his account of necessary connection Hume breaks rank from his rivals in a fundamental way. For Hume suggests that the direct source of the metaphysical idea necessary connexion, contrary to his rivals, is not some objective source, but an internal impression, that he identifies with a particular psychological disposition. As he says in the Treatise, putting it rather bluntly: 'Either we have no idea of necessity, or necessity is nothing but that determination of the thought to pass from causes to effects and from effects to causes, according to their experienced union'. (T 166) Now one may wonder where this leaves Hume's rivals. In particular, given that Hume's view appears to be that necessity is nothing but some psychological propensity, how does he regard the non-psychological explications of his rivals? In order to answer this question, we need to reconsider Hume's views on the ontological commitments of the competing theories. For while he objects to the theories of necessary connection endorsed by his rivals for a number of reasons, a major, if not the most fundamental criticism that Hume raises - namely, that concerning the semantic status of the theories - rests on his views on the ontological commitments of these rival theories. What then are Hume's views on the ontological commitments of these theories, and what role do these views play in Hume's semantic assessment of his rival's theories?

34. Where the ontologies of rival theories of necessary connection are concerned, Hume implicitly recognizes two distinct groups. Take the first opposing group. According to Hume, certain philosophers subscribe to theories of necessary connection that commit them to various properties in (external) objects:

There are some, who maintain, that bodies operate by their substantial form; others, by their accidents or qualities; several, by their matter and form; some, by their form and accidents; others by certain virtues and faculties distinct from all this. All these sentiments again are mix'd and vary'd in a thousand different ways...(T 158)

Nevertheless, it seems that for Hume, there is a common ingredient in these diverse accounts of necessity: namely 'the supposition of an efficacy in...the known qualities of matter'. (T 158) For after his brief outline of some of the versions of necessity (allegedly) espoused by the members of this group of philosophers, Hume goes on to object that from the proliferation of these theories we can 'form a strong presumption, that none of them have any solidity or evidence, and that the supposition of an efficacy in any of the
known qualities of matter is entirely without foundation'. (T 158) In short, despite this diversity, what unites these (different) theories of necessity, intimates Hume, is a common ingredient i.e. the endorsement of the thesis that there is 'an efficacy in...the known qualities of matter': an external efficacy, that apparently is the power responsible for the generation of the observed effects in causal contexts. (T 158) However, not all Hume's rivals endorse this thesis on the existence of an efficacy in matter. For the occasionalists think otherwise.

35. As Hume tell us, the occasionalists object that 'the ultimate force and efficacy of nature is perfectly unknown to us, and that 'tis in vain we search for it in all the known qualities of matter' (T 159) - a position that Hume himself finds congenial. But there are distinct limits to this congeniality. For while these thinkers subscribe to a (negative) thesis that Hume would endorse, this second rival group defends a position that he does not accept i.e. as he sees it, this group persists with an overly ambitious view on necessary connection. For these philosophers - as we have seen in our earlier discussion of the occasionalists - still maintain that the source of our ideas of power or necessity is not a subjective phenomenon, but God. For them, our ideas of power are spiritually induced i.e. the deity is the true source of our ideas of power. As Hume puts it in the Treatise, the occasionalists' objection levelled against those that accept that efficacy is in matter leads these theological rivals 'into another [view], which they regard as perfectly unavoidable'. The position this second rival group of philosophers feels compelled to endorse is the view that 'the deity...is the prime mover of the universe, [and the source of] all those motions, and configurations, and qualities, with which [the universe] is endow'd'. (T 159) From this we can conclude that Hume thinks that his rivals subscribe to theories of necessary connection that are committed to non -subjective ontologies of power. Whether one is from the first camp of metaphysicians - with their ascriptions of power in matter - or from the theological camp - with their ascription of power in the deity - as Hume sees it, his rivals are committed to the view that the source of our ideas of power is some non-subjective phenomenon. In other words, despite the differences in the details of their respective positions, as Hume sees it, his rivals are still wedded to views on necessary connection committed to objective ontologies.

36. Now in *his* account of the source of our idea of necessary connexion, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Hume defends a view that neither necessarily commits him to the existence of properties in external objects,
nor necessarily commits him to the existence of properties of some external deity. His view can be considered less ambitious in that it only explicitly commits him to the existence of particular subjective phenomena - impressions and ideas:

The idea of necessity arises from some impression. There is no impression convey'd by our senses, which can give rise to that idea. It must, therefore, be deriv'd from some internal impression, or impression of reflexion. There is no internal impression, which has any relation to the present business, but that propensity, which custom produces, to pass from an object to the idea of its usual attendant. This therefore is the essence of necessity. (T 165)

With the articulation of Hume's views on necessary connection, we have at least three competing accounts of necessary connection, each of which is committed to a different ontology. What singles Hume's account out from the others, is the radical suggestion that it is possible to be committed to a subjective ontology of impressions and ideas, while denying that these mental phenomena - and for that matter, any other phenomena - have knowable powers. Furthermore, not only does Hume intimate that we view his as a viable proposal, he goes further and explicitly argues that his opponents' counter-proposals on power generate metaphysical theories of necessary connection that cannot be accepted from a semantic point of view. Thus it seems that his account of necessary connection with its concomitant arguments is not merely a statement of differences, if I can put it like this, but a challenge, if not an outright condemnation of his rivals' theories. In particular, the defence of Hume's radically different account of necessary connection, as I shall now attempt to demonstrate, can be viewed as an attempt to brand his rivals' theories as semantically deviant, if not meaningless. Without further ado, let us consider Hume's case against his rivals' theories.

37. In his assessment of his rivals' theories, Hume gets off to a bad start. Or so it seems. For it appears that Hume uncritically assumes that his rivals, in being committed to an ontology of objective external phenomena, especially that of objective powers, thereby necessarily also endorse the view that the phenomena are intersubjectively discoverable. For in his assessment of his rivals' theories, Hume constructs a number of thought experiments, for himself and his readers, in order to test these theories - a procedure that clearly presupposes that Hume and his readers could, at
least in principle, discover the phenomena posited by the theories. Why search for another's postulated existents unless it is possible for these entities to be discovered by a third party? If Hume did not think that his rivals regard their ontologies of power as intersubjectively discoverable, his assessment would not have proceeded as it did. So, the fact that Hume does not articulate, let alone defend this extension of his rivals' theories must surely count against his subsequent (negative) assessment of his competitors' positions.

38. Further support for this objection emerges from the following. Hume's failure to produce the goods, i.e. his failure to identify the presumably intersubjectively discoverable power in objects or the deity - is surely regarded by him as a mark against, if not a refutation of his rivals' theories. But this failure need not count against their theories, but simply against the thesis of intersubjectivity. If Hume fails to discover the posits of his rivals' theories, what one quite plausibly might suggest, is that what Hume has done, is show that it is not the case that everyone can discover these postulated external phenomena. Thus it is in Hume's interests, continues this objection, to establish the relationship between the thesis of intersubjectivity and the theories endorsed by his rivals. For if this thesis is not a logical consequence of these rival theories, or regarded as part of these theories by his rivals, the failure by Hume to discover the posits of these theories, does not necessarily count against them. Therefore, if it is his rivals' theories he is after, and not the thesis of intersubjectivity, Hume must either show that his rivals subscribe to this extension, or argue that it is a logical consequence of their position.

39. But does it not follow, some might respond, that in subscribing to a view that posits the existence of external or objective phenomena - as opposed to mental or subjective phenomena - one is necessarily also subscribing to the view that the phenomena are intersubjectively discoverable? That is to say, is it even necessary for Hume to either point out that his rivals subscribe to this additional claim, or to argue that they must subscribe to this extension, as is suggested by this objection? I think that it is. For it is not the case that the commitment to an objective or external ontology necessarily entails that this ontology is intersubjectively discoverable. For instance, one can plausibly hold that only a select group of individuals can gain access to this external ontology: one might suggest that only those with the appropriate natural inheritance - say, mystics - can discover powers. This possibility suggests that there is no contradiction in asserting both that a phenomenon is external, and that it is not accessible to
everybody. All of which suggests, that it is necessary for Hume to argue for the view that in subscribing to objective ontologies, his rivals are suggesting that these ontologies are intersubjectively discoverable. Thus his failure to articulate, let alone defend this thesis in either the Treatise or Enquiry, is likely to detract from his subsequent discussion on necessary connection.

40. With this preliminary objection behind us, let us turn to more substantial matters, and explore in some detail Hume's critical response to his opposition. On the assumption that their theories are committed to objective ontologies that are intersubjectively discoverable, Hume proceeds to assess the respective merits of his rivals' theories. Alluding to the central expressions of the metaphysical theories relied on by the members of his two principal opposition camps, Hume objects that with

all these expressions, so apply'd, [i.e. with their respective commitments to alleged objective ontologies] we have really no distinct meaning, and make use only of common words, without any clear and determinate ideas. But as 'tis more probable, that these expressions do here lose their true meaning by being wrong apply'd, than that they never have any meaning, 'twill be proper to bestow another consideration on this subject, to see if possibly we can discover the nature and origin of these ideas, we annex to them. (T 162)

From this passage it appears that for Hume, his rivals' theories have a serious shortcoming - namely, that central expressions from these theories have 'no distinct meaning'. Furthermore, he proffers two likely explanations for this shortcoming, one of which he deems 'more probable'. Adopting the view that the meaning of a word can be assimilated, if not identified with the idea associated with it - as is apparent from the first sentence in the quotation above - Hume appears to object that his rivals' theories are obscure. For he suggests that the ideas associated with the expressions of these competing theories of necessity are obscure. As he puts it, with these theories we have a set of expressions that 'have really no distinct meaning' - expressions 'without any clear and determinate ideas'. (T 162) And rather than accept that this necessarily commits his rivals to the charge that they are operating with meaningless theories - for theories that have obscure meanings, presumably, at least have meanings - Hume proposes that we view their theories as semantically deviant. That is to say, Hume's proposal appears to be that we view the rival theories as
meaningful, but associated with the wrong, allegedly obscure meanings. For he says that it is 'more probable' that the expressions from these theories have lost 'their true meaning by being wrong apply'd, than that they never have any meaning'. (T 162) Before we consider Hume's justification for his claim that his rivals' theories are obscure, I want to say a little more on the objection itself.

41. In the first place, the evidence suggests that Hume's criticism of his rivals' theories is ambiguous. In particular, it seems that he is here really raising two separate semantic issues in his assessment of the theories. To begin with, the objection appears to be that some of the expressions from these theories are obscure i.e. that these expressions, when used by his rivals, 'have really no distinct meaning'. (T 162) However, his objection also appears to be that these expressions have taken on different, more specifically false or inappropriate meanings in his rivals' theories. For when Hume asserts that it is 'more probable, that these expressions do here [i.e. in the rivals' theories] lose their true meaning by being wrong apply'd, than that they never have any meaning' (T 162), he seems to be objecting that the expressions have undergone an undesirable change in meaning. Unfortunately, the change is not some miniscule alteration, but one that now endows the expressions with meanings that are no longer true, or appropriate. That is to say, as Hume sees it, the expressions have now lost their 'true meanings'. So, on the one hand it looks as though Hume charges that the expressions from his rivals' theories are obscure, while on the other hand it seems that the objection is that these expressions have lost the meanings that (allegedly) were rightly theirs, and have taken on entirely different, and for Hume, unacceptable meanings. Assuming that my reasoning here is correct, what then is the relationship for Hume, if any, between these two objections?

42. The last question becomes especially important when we realize that these objections can be shown to be different. For suppose that I attempt to teach Simon the meaning of the Xhosa word 'inyati'. To do this I expose him to the appropriate objects in various contexts, and with sufficient exposure and application on his part, eventually he learns to use the word. Initially, Simon feels uneasy when using the word, because his understanding of the term is imprecise. But with practise, the term becomes less obscure, and at some stage, will probably be applied fairly confidently by him. That is to say, after a while Simon will acquire more confidence, and gain a clearer understanding of the meaning of the term. However, we cannot assume that the gradual elimination of obscurity, as
one becomes more proficient with the term, necessarily entails that the
term will eventually be understood correctly. Experience may enable
Simon to become clearer about the meaning of the term 'inyati', but on its
own, this need be no guarantee that his application of the (now understood)
term is correct. For all we know, Simon may have a clear and firm grasp of
'the wrong meaning'. Which suggests that there can be a conceptual divide
between clarity and application: to say that an individual clearly
understands a term need not commit one to the view that that individual
knows how to correctly apply the term. All of which brings us back to
the question raised in the previous paragraph. Given that Hume's view
against his rivals' theories can be construed as an ambiguous response,
how does he view the relationship between the two objections?

43. While he has not explicitly raised this issue, the passage from page 162
of the Treatise, that has been quoted above, suggests, as I see it, that Hume
runs the two objections into one another. That is to say, it seems that Hume
has not drawn a clear distinction between his suggestion that the
expressions in question are obscure, and that they are associated with the
wrong meanings. After objecting to his rivals' positions, and having
claimed that some of the expressions from their theories have 'no distinct
meaning', he immediately goes on to offer a diagnosis that at first blush
appears to have little, if any bearing on the malady allegedly afflicting these
theories. Hume's adoption of the proposal that the expressions have lost
'their true meaning' at the hands of his rivals, is surely appropriate only if he
believes that the restoration of the so-called 'true meaning' to these
expressions will result in expressions that no longer lack distinct meanings.
If so, Hume appears to be suggesting that the replacement of the allegedly
obscure meanings espoused by his rivals, by some true meaning -
whatever this may be - will not only align these expressions with the
correct meaning, but most important, will ensure that the expressions are
now associated with a meaning that is distinct. This interpretation of
Hume's assessment of his adversaries is borne out - or so I think - by
considering the justification Hume offers for his assertion that some of the
expressions from his rivals' theories are obscure. Let us turn our attention
to this issue.

44. Unfortunately, Hume has not made things easy for us where his charge
of obscurity in the Treatise is concerned. Other than simply state this
objection to his rivals' theories, section xiv of the Treatise, as I read it, does
not contain an explicit defence of this objection. In fact, as far as Hume is
concerned, his suggestion that his rivals' theories are obscure is a direct
consequence of his failure to discover the postulated power or force in any external phenomenon. After reporting that he has failed to discover the phenomenon power that is posited by his opponents' theories, and generalizing this by suggesting that 'the human mind cannot form such an idea of two objects, as to conceive any connexion betwixt them' (T:161), Hume draws the following inference:

Thus upon the whole we may infer, that when we talk of any being, whether of a superior or inferior nature, as endow'd with a power or force, proportion'd to any effect; when we speak of a necessary connexion betwixt objects, and suppose, that this connexion depends upon an efficacy or energy, with which any of these objects are endow'd; in all these expressions, so apply'd, we have really no distinct meaning, and make use only of common words, without any clear and determinate ideas. (T 162, underlining mine)

But does it follow that a theory is obscure, merely because some individual - who, it will turn out, happens to subscribe to a competing theory with a different set of ontological commitments! - does not discover the posits of the theory? For Hume, the implicit response to this question appears to be 'Yes'. According to him, or so it appears, if the above quotation is any indication, obscurity is the logical consequence of his failure to discover the posits of his rivals' theories.

45. Our initial reaction to this move by Hume, if I have depicted it correctly, must surely be a sceptical one. In the first place, surely Hume, with his own axes to grind, is not an objective party in the search for the posits of his rivals' metaphysical theories? For an individual who pejoratively characterizes the speculations of metaphysicians as nothing but 'noise and clamour...managed with the greatest warmth' (T xiv) is unlikely to take kindly to their posits. And even if we overlooked this criticism, and regarded Hume as an objective evaluator, intent on giving his rivals a fair hearing, his failure to uncover the posits of their theories is surely not sufficient proof that no posits can be discovered. For clearly, the possibility remains that others will discover them. So it appears that unless Hume establishes that it is in principle not possible to gain access to the ontologies of objective powers espoused by his opponents' theories unless he does so, his failure to discover the posits of these theories is not necessarily an indictment of those theories - for all we know, it might be an indictment of the evaluator himself. Now it is clear that in both his Treatise and Enquiry
analyses of necessary connection Hume has neither explicitly satisfied these requirements, nor shown why they cannot be met. And while this is not to say that Hume nowhere attempts to meet either of these demands, nor to suggest that they cannot be met - as my subsequent reconstruction will make clear - it does appear that certain crucial methodological assumptions raised by Hume's discussion of necessary connection have not been explicitly defended in either his *Treatise* or *Enquiry* assessment of his rivals' theories of necessary connection. In short, it appears that Hume's critical enterprise against his rivals faces a crisis of legitimacy: an untenable situation only exacerbated by his silence on the issues.

46. But is this initial response to Hume's moves appropriate? I think not, for the following reasons. Admittedly, it looks as though Hume has overlooked certain methodological issues, and failed to defend what appears to be a strand of egocentricism in the investigation of his rivals' theories. However, it can be argued that these appearances are misleading. Less cryptically, it can be shown that the above charge of egocentricism is misplaced. For Hume does not appear to be claiming that he is some privileged, objective investigator, as the criticism intimates. Instead, the evidence suggests that Hume's procedure rests on a far weaker assumption: namely, that he is a representative examiner of his rivals' theories. For when Hume asserts that his rivals, in constructing their metaphysical theories, 'make use only of common words' (T 162), he is not only drawing attention to the nature of some of the crucial expressions in these theories, but equally important, he is suggesting that individuals familiar with these so-called common words can assess their application. That is to say, if the central expressions in his rivals' theories are merely 'common words', as Hume maintains is the case, the implication is that anyone with a reasonable command of the ordinary or non-technical language that contains these 'common words' will be in the position to determine the semantic standing of these rival metaphysical theories.

47. Now Hume clearly views himself as blessed with a reasonable command of these common words, and the ordinary language that embraces them. For instance, when he articulates the three ingredients allegedly encompassed by 'cause' early in the *Treatise* (pp 74-78), there is little doubt in Hume's mind that the term is associated with the ideas of contiguity, succession and necessary connection. And while there are some questions, as Hume sees it, about the origins and nature of these component ideas that constitute the idea of causality, the confident manner with which he identifies these ingredients strongly suggests that Hume has
no qualms over his command of this 'common word'. But not only does Hume feel comfortable with this 'common word', he clearly views himself as a presumably representative member of some larger group of individuals, all of whom view causality, and especially necessary connection, along the same lines. This is borne out by a consideration of the form of the questions raised by Hume on the origins of the ideas associated with 'cause'. For we find that throughout this phase of his discussion, Hume relies a good deal on the pronoun 'we': surely a strong signal that Hume views himself as a member of some wider community? In the *Treatise*, for example, we find him presenting the issues as follows:

Of these questions there occur two, which I shall proceed to examine, viz.

First, For what reason *we* pronounce it necessary, that every thing whose existence has a beginning, shou'd also have a cause? Secondly, Why *we* conclude, that such particular causes must *necessarily* have such particular effects; and what is the nature of that *inference* *we* draw from the one to the other, and of the *belief* *we* repose in it? (T 78, my underlining)

Put briefly, the texts suggest that Hume regards himself as a representative member of some larger linguistic community, using various terms - the so-called 'common words' - in a fairly uniform manner. And in that case, the charge raised above against Hume's procedure in assessing the semantic standing of his rivals' theories may well be misplaced. For now it turns out that Hume appears to be trading on a fairly weak assumption in his analysis of his rivals' positions, and not relying on the far stronger suggestion that he is a privileged, objective investigator of these theories.

48. However, even if we allow that Hume's procedure against his rivals' theories does not commit him to the assumption that he is a privileged objective investigator, but that he is merely a representative examiner, the issue raised earlier on the relationship between obscurity and the failure to discover a theory's posits remains open. That is to say, even if we grant that Hume is a legitimate investigator of these opposing metaphysical theories - by virtue of his representative status - it still needs to be shown that theories are obscure because their ontologies escape discovery. How does Hume substantiate this thesis? We need to turn to this issue.

49. To my knowledge, there is no explicit defence of this inference
50. As I showed early on in this section, Hume lays great stress on the ontological differences between his theory and those endorsed by his rivals. This emphasis, I suggest, now manifests itself with Hume's objections to the semantic standing of his opponents' theories. To appreciate this, we need to remind ourselves of a thesis that Hume subscribes to on the relationship between ideas and objects. In his Treatise discussion on the origin of our ideas, Hume says the following:

    To give a child an idea of scarlet or orange, of sweet or bitter, I present the objects... (T 5)

Or as he also puts it, perhaps more forcefully,

    We cannot form to ourselves a just idea of the taste of a pine-apple, without having actually tasted it. (T 5)

This suggests that for Hume there is a definite relationship between the stature of the ideas one has, and the nature of the objects one has experienced: if the presentation is unambiguous, in optimal conditions, and the objects of the appropriate perceptual dimensions, the ideas that form will possess a correspondingly high degree of clarity. For instance, suppose that I wanted you to acquire the idea of a wildebeeste. The quality of the idea that I manage to generate in your mind will depend, to a large extent, on the way in which I presented the animal to you, and on the nature of the animal used to produce your idea. Had I to show you a maimed wildebeeste at midnight, in the middle of a terrible storm, the idea you form of the animal will be defective - that is to say, your idea will deviate from the (clear) idea that could form, had I to present a well developed, healthy wildebeeste in optimum circumstances. As Hume might put it, in circumstances less than the optimum, you will be 'without any clear and determinate ideas' of the wildebeeste. (T 162)

51. Given that the meaning of a word, for Hume, can be assimilated, if not identified with the idea associated with that word, if the idea lacks clarity, the word or expression associated with that idea has 'no distinct meaning'.
(T 162) So if the object or impression sought for the idea proves evasive, or is perceived in less than optimal conditions, the ideas that are associated with the expressions or words - i.e. their meanings - at best, must lack the clarity of those ideas that could form when the requisite object or impression is presented in optimal conditions. Hence the expressions of the theories that espouse these allegedly evasive entities must be obscure. In short, for Hume, the failure to discover the entities posited by a theory, can entail that that theory is obscure. To use Hume's parlance: clear ideas cannot form either when the object is poorly perceived, or where there are no objects to be perceived.

52. If the reasoning presented above is acceptable, we might conclude that Hume could defend the suggestion that the failure to discover the posits of some of the central expressions from some theory entails that the expressions, and by implication that theory, is obscure. Does this mean that Hume has successfully established that his rivals' metaphysical theories of necessary connection are obscure - and thus ought to be rejected? Not if the following methodological objection against Hume's attack on his rivals holds. It takes the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*.

53. Suppose that Hume is correct when he suggests that his rivals' theories are obscure. Can he, following the procedure outlined above, *demonstrate* that his rivals' theories are obscure? It would seem not. For Hume's procedure is to search for the posits of the theories - a *procedure that presupposes from the outset that Hume knows clearly what he is looking for*. That is to say, Hume would need a clear idea of what he was looking for, in order to demonstrate that the posits of the theory being evaluated are evasive. But if a theory is obscure, by virtue of the obscurity of some of its central expressions, the ideas associated with these expressions cannot be clear. So, if one endorses what appears to be Hume's procedure, it seems that one *cannot* rely on the obscure ideas of the expressions from an obscure theory of necessary connection when attempting to show that *that theory* is obscure. But in his assessment of his rivals' metaphysical theories of necessary connection, it appears that Hume has relied on their allegedly obscure ideas in his attempt to find their posits, and by default, demonstrate that the expressions from these theories, and hence the theories themselves, are obscure. So either their ideas - and by implication, the associated expressions - are actually *not* obscure, and thus Hume's method is legitimate, or his method against his rivals is illegitimate, and he has failed to demonstrate that some of their expressions, and thus their theories are obscure. Either way, it appears that Hume has not, if not cannot,
successfully establish that his rivals' theories are obscure.

54. If valid, this would constitute a telling objection against Hume's attempts to establish his account of necessary connection. For it would mean that one of the central criticisms levelled against his opposition, and by implication, one of the foundations of his own view of necessity is flawed. But is this a telling objection against Hume's attack on his rivals? And would he regard this as a fatal blow to his enterprise of erecting a new account of necessary connection? Perhaps not. For this objection to Hume's procedure against his rivals rests on two fundamental assumptions that themselves appear to be open to criticism. The first assumption concerns the obscurity tolerance level - if I might put it like this - of Hume's investigation, while the second is on the status of the expressions relied on by Hume when assessing his rivals' theories. We need to take a closer look at each of these assumptions, and most important, determine how Hume would have attempted to refute them.

55. In the first place, the methodological objection raised above to Hume's semantic assessment of his rivals' theories presupposes that absolutely no obscurity can be allowed into the investigation of the theories Hume is intent on discrediting. If one does not adopt the principle that no obscurity be tolerated at any stage of the investigation, a natural counter to the objection arises. For now it becomes plausible to suggest that Hume could at least initiate an enquiry against his rivals' theories with ideas that are not clear i.e. initiate an enquiry that will be conducted, in the early stages at least, in some groping manner. While not guaranteeing success, the presence of obscure ideas - contrary to the methodological objection raised earlier in this chapter - at least makes possible Hume's search for the posits of his rivals' theories. Admittedly, the results of these groping searches are likely to be viewed as highly tentative, but the search is at least possible. This possibility then gives rise to a central question: Does Hume endorse the strong methodological rule that obscurity cannot be tolerated at any stage in the search for the posits of his rivals' theories? If he does not, Hume's assessment of his opponents' theories, and thus his own views on necessary connection, might stand after all. For then a fundamental assumption of a potentially damaging methodological objection is refuted, thereby raising serious questions about the viability of the objection itself. As this important issue impinges on the broader consideration of Hume's views on obscurity in metaphysics - an issue to be taken up later in the next chapter - I shall not discuss it here. For the moment then, let us leave the issue open. However, where the second
assumption of the above methodological objection against Hume's attack against his rivals is concerned, at this stage we can afford to be less evasive.

56. It is clear that the above methodological counter to Hume's arguments against his rivals' theories does not, even if internally coherent, entail that these theories are not obscure. Even if Hume does subscribe to the rule that absolutely no obscurity be allowed in the search for the posits of his rivals' metaphysical theories of necessary connection, it can still be argued - contrary to the objection raised in the previous paragraph - that his failure to find the posits does count against the semantic standing of these theories. For the objection raised above against Hume's procedure rests on a second assumption that can be shown to be false. This assumption concerns the status of the terms and ideas relied on by Hume in his investigation of his rivals' theories. More specifically, can we assume that Hume is relying on the same ideas - and by extension, the same associated expressions - as those relied on by his rivals, in his search for their posits, as has been intimated by the methodological objection above? Or is he perhaps relying on a different, presumably clear set of expressions and ideas in his investigation? For if it can be shown that the latter is a more accurate characterization of Hume's procedure when attempting to discredit his rivals' views on necessary connection, his failure to discover their posits could still count against the semantic standing of their theories. But in that case, given that Hume's ultimate view of his opposition is that they operate with expressions 'without any clear and determinate ideas' (T 162), we would also need to determine the status of the relationship between the (presumably clear) ideas and expressions Hume relies on, and those (allegedly obscure) ideas and expressions used by his rivals. So what is the semantic standing of the terms relied on by Hume in his attack against his rivals?

57. While the evidence is fragmentary at best, as I see it, it can be argued that Hume thinks that the expressions and ideas that he relies on to assess his rivals' theories are not obscure. Unfortunately, as we shall also discover, this interpretation - that has its textual support - does not appear to square entirely with other remarks made by Hume on the issue. While not logically incompatible, the two positions do appear to be incongruent. Without further ado, let us take a look at the evidence.

58. I argued earlier that Hume appears to draw on a fairly weak assumption in his assessment of his opposition: namely, that he is a
representative critic of their theories of necessary connection. Adopting the view that his rivals are constructing metaphysical theories of necessary connection out of expressions that Hume classifies as 'common words', the suggestion then appears to be - or so I argued - that Hume regards himself as a competent member of a particular linguistic community, and as such, familiar with the terms central to his oppositions' theories. But if the central components of his rivals' theories are terms that are common to the linguistic community of which Hume is a member, surely these terms are likely to be regarded as clear and fairly determinate, at least as far as the members of this (Humean) linguistic community is concerned? Would the currency of these terms not bestow on them a patina of clarity for these individuals? For instance, the term 'university' can be regarded as a common word for the community of academics, at least. And while they might not be in the position to proffer sound definitions of the term, their proficiency with it is surely a sign that they feel comfortable with the term. That is to say, they find 'university' an unproblematic, or clear term. As Gilbert Ryle points out, while many people are unable to talk sense about concepts, they still find various expressions meaningful and clear, for they 'know by practice how to operate with concepts, anyhow inside familiar fields'. (Ryle 1973: 9) A case of familiarity breeding notions of clarity!

59. But can we conclude that a term is clearly understood because it has been, and continues to be used on a regular basis by the members of some linguistic community? Not necessarily, suggests Hume. For there are expressions, that are frequently used by individuals, that cannot, under any circumstances, be classified as clear. These are terms that lack requisite ideas. As Hume sees it, we are not always punctilious when operating with language, and sometimes rely on terms that are not associated with ideas:

For it being usual, after the frequent use of terms, which are really significant and intelligible, to omit the idea, which we woud express by them, and to preserve only the custom, by which we recal [sic] the idea at pleasure; 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, and to have a secret meaning, which we might discover by reflection. The resemblance of their appearance devides the mind, as is usual, and makes us imagine a thorough resemblance and conformity. (T 224)

However, even if we cast aside those terms without associated ideas, and
confined ourselves to the meaningful expressions of our language, continues Hume, we still cannot view frequency of use as a necessary and sufficient condition of clarity. For there are terms, their regular application notwithstanding, that are obscure:

As to the frequent use of the words, Force, Power, Energy, &c., which every where occur in common conversation, as well as in philosophy; that is no proof, that we are acquainted, in any instance, with the connecting principle between cause and effect, or can account ultimately for the production of one thing by another. These words, as commonly used, have very loose meanings annexed to them; and their ideas are very uncertain and confused. (E 52)

Now suppose that we grant that the terms Hume relies on when inspecting his rivals' theories are 'common words', and further accept my suggestion that frequency of use can bestow at least a patina of clarity on a term. Even with these assumptions, Hume's remarks here on clarity and frequency of use serve as a reminder that we need to be cautious about the inferences we make on the semantic status of the terms relied on by Hume in his investigation of his rivals. Given these references to some of the shortcomings of our linguistic practices, we are not at liberty to conclude that Hume's investigative terms are free of the obscurity complained of in his rivals' theories. Furthermore, not only are we restrained from drawing this conclusion, a consideration of the extract above from the Enquiry strongly suggests that we would be hard-pressed to draw it at all.

60. If it is true that 'the words, Force, Power, Energy, &c.,' are obscure, as used both in 'common conversation, as well as in philosophy' (E 52), it becomes difficult, if not impossible to accept that the so-called 'common words' that Hume relies on against his rivals can be clear. By his own admission, these terms are obscure when relied on by individuals in 'common conversation': in this situation, they 'have very loose meanings annexed to them; and their ideas are very uncertain and confused'. (E 52) So if Hume is operating against his rivals with clear terms, given this indictment against the terms as used by the linguistic community that engages in so-called 'common conversation', he must be relying on terms from some other community. Now this raises a problem for Hume. For he also holds that these terms are obscure when relied on by the philosophical community. And given that Hume, to the best of my knowledge, does not explicitly acknowledge the existence of any other linguistic community, it
becomes difficult, at best, to accept that he is relying on terms that are clear, when he assesses his rivals' metaphysical theories. Thus it appears that the threat posed by the methodological objection raised above remains to be dispelled. Without evidence to the contrary, we are bound to endorse the view announced there that the terms Hume relies on in his investigation are themselves obscure. And in that case, we will be sorely tempted to conclude that Hume's attempts to discredit his rivals, and most important, his attempt to erect his own account of necessary connection in their place, is fundamentally flawed. However, as I pointed out earlier, there is at least one issue that still stands between us and this damning indictment of Hume's efforts to establish a new account of necessary connection. This concerns the extent to which Hume is prepared to tolerate obscurity in his investigations of his rivals' metaphysical theories of necessary connection. We need to turn to this issue in the next chapter.

Notes.

1. The Treatise account of necessary connection, that centers on the discussion contained in Book I Part III, section XIV (T 155-172), is slightly longer than section VII of the Enquiry (E 39-53). However, it is not as focussed on the issue concerning the search for the source of the idea of necessary connection as is the case with the later, more extended Enquiry analysis.

2. Hume provides us with an alternative account of his objective. Equivocating on 'term' and 'idea', Hume suggests the following: 'To be fully acquainted, therefore, with the idea of power or necessary connexion, let us search for it in all the sources, from which it may possibly be derived'. (E 41) So Hume is not only proposing to explicate certain metaphysical terms by searching for the source of the ideas associated with those terms, as I have suggested above, he is also suggesting that these ideas have the same source. That he does this is a manifestation of his view, discussed in section one of the previous chapter, that 'the terms of efficacy, agency, power, force, energy, necessity, connexion, and productive quality, are all nearly synonymous'. (T 157)

3. I use the term 'directly' advisedly in this paragraph. As we shall see, Hume will later claim that metaphysical ideas can and do arise from the
observation of sensible objects - but from a multitude of observations. In this case, we could say that the idea arises indirectly: after a number of observations, the observer feels the presence of a particular determination of the mind, and this determination, as I argued in the previous chapter, is the sought for impression that is associated with Hume's idea of power. Without the initial observations of the object, this inward impression would not form, and hence the idea of power, for Hume, would not develop either. So objects are important for the development of this idea. But only indirectly. (Without this qualification, Hume's views would strike one as contradictory.)

4. See Chapter Two (section three) for a discussion on simple and complex ideas, and the argument for my interpretation that the idea of necessary connection is simple for Hume.

5. The qualification, 'in single instances of their operation' in his conclusion that 'it is impossible...that the idea of power can be derived from the contemplation of bodies, in single instances of their operation...' (E 42) strikes me as unnecessary. If power is not a sensible property, observations of a body cannot directly generate an (internal) impression of power.

6. The fact that Hume reaches for the same set of reasons to deal with what appear to be different issues, is a manifestation of his view that there is no fundamental difference between the science of mental phenomena and that of non-mental phenomena. Compare the above move of his with the following statement made early in his Treatise: claiming that the science of external objects rests on 'experience and observation', Hume suggests that as it is evident that the essence of the mind is as unknown to us as that of external objects, it must be equally 'impossible to form any notion of its powers and qualities otherwise than from careful and exact experiments'. (E 42)

7. Hume does not tell us how the occasionalists would explain how God provides us with ideas. But given Hume's views on the relation between ideas and impressions, in his explication of their position it seems that he would need something like S3.

9. With his 'devastating' attack on the metaphysicians' views on the source of the idea of necessary connection, why does Hume not accept the conclusion that we have no idea of necessary connection, and that 'these words are absolutely without any meaning'? This question, that has been dealt with tentatively in Chapter One, will receive more treatment in the next chapter.

10. Immanuel Kant goes further than Hume on the first score here, for he suggests that Hume's analysis is not confined to the issue of necessary connection, and thus the related issue of causality, but that it impinges on metaphysics at large:

   I therefore first tried whether Hume's objection could not be put into a general form, and soon found that the concept of the connection of cause and effect was by no means the only concept by which the understanding thinks the connection of things a priori, but rather that metaphysics consists altogether of such concepts. (Kant 1976: 8)

Kant's conception of Hume's analysis is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

11. Confirmation of this interpretation of Hume's views on the issue emerges from a consideration of the following from the Treatise. Having told us that the interaction of causally related objects or events 'can never produce any new quality in the object, which can be the model of that idea [of necessary connection]', Hume goes on to assert his thesis that it is our observations of the interactions that produce 'a new impression in the mind, which is its real model'. (T 165) Furthermore - and this is most important for us here - Hume goes on to insist that unless we approach the problem on the source of the idea of necessary connection from a Humean perspective, we cannot understand necessity at all. As he puts it,

   Without considering it in this view, we can never arrive at the most distant notion of it, or be able to attribute it either to external or internal objects, to spirit or body, to causes or effects. (T 165)

12. To use more recent (Fregean) terminology: the grasping of an expression's sense can be no guarantee that only the appropriate referents will be picked out by individuals using the expression.
CHAPTER FOUR

Hume's conception of the problem of necessary connection

1. Some may find the concluding segments of the preceding two chapters somewhat disconcerting. For in both instances, the discussion ends on a note that seems to run counter to the guiding spirit of this essay. On the one hand, one might be left with the nagging suspicion that more could have been said about the fact that Hume is not more forthcoming in his discussion of the impression he isolates as the source of the idea of necessary connection. On the other hand, by the end of Chapter Three we still find ourselves with numerous unresolved questions, even after a fairly lengthy enquiry of Hume's defence of his position. Surely such inconclusive results from these analyses are to be viewed as anathema to an investigation, such as this, that, as I pointed out at the outset of this essay, expressly seeks precision? Or is the indecision perhaps the inevitable outcome of the exploration of any treatment of an issue that Hume warns is 'one of the most sublime questions in philosophy'? (T 156) As this, the concluding discussion of the essay will make clear - or so I hope - the latter is not an appropriate explanation for the relative open-endedness of some of the components of my preceding analysis. For a central factor remains to be explored that can both account for Hume's reticence over issues we might regard as in need of further treatment, and help dispel the charge that some of my earlier analyses are inconclusive. This factor, that has hitherto only been mentioned briefly, concerns Hume's views on obscurity in his metaphysical investigations. As I intend to demonstrate below, a consideration of this issue not only serves as a counter to the possible charge of incompleteness that can be raised against the preceding analysis, but more important, provides an invaluable framework within which to place Hume's radical account of necessary connection. For the evidence suggests that Hume's analysis is guided, if not entirely determined by the dictum that unless an account of necessary connection can be articulated
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clearly, that account ought not to be seriously articulated at all. Wittgenstein, in proposition 4.116 of the Tractatus suggests that everything 'that can be thought at all can be thought clearly. Everything that can be put into words can be put clearly'. (1974: 51) As I shall argue below, Hume appears to go a step further with his suggestion that where necessary connection is concerned, not only can the thinking and the account be clear, but that it must be so if any progress is to be made into this perennial metaphysical issue.

2. Early in this essay I suggested, admittedly in a tentative manner, that Hume develops his radical - as he sees it 'paradoxical' (T 166) - view of necessity in response to a dilemma on the meaningfulness of the term 'necessary connection'. As I argued in Chapter One, for Hume, one either accepts that the failure to discover an obvious impression for this term, 'given what appears to be his assumption that he already possesses an idea of necessary connection, has the undesirable consequence of undermining the priority principle, and perhaps the overall objective of the Treatise' (19), or one persists with the view that the term is meaningful, refuses to relinquish the priority principle - despite the initial setbacks in the search for the requisite impression - and thereby concedes that there is a 'non-standard (and hence likely controversial) impression for the term'. (19) In short, it seems that either we accept that the term is meaningless, or concede that it is associated with an unusual, and little known impression. Now it can be argued that Hume, in his account of necessary connection, with its stress on a specific psychological disposition as an internal impression, attacks the latter horn of the (alleged) dilemma. For when he maintains that necessity is 'nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another' (T 165), it appears that Hume is suggesting that the term 'necessary connection' has an associated impression, but that it is an unusual impression or source: namely, a hitherto undiscovered mental phenomenon, and not, as commonly supposed, either an external objective entity, some sense impression generated by some external entity, or as Locke maintained, some mental reflective process. But is this suggested interpretation of Hume's view of the problem and its solution correct? If not, how else can, and should we explain the strategy adopted by Hume when developing his radical account of necessary connection? These are the central concerns of this, the final chapter of this essay. As we shall see in the discussion that follows, while not complete as it stands, the preceding characterization of Hume's assessment of the situation is not wide of the
3. By way of a prelude, let us open our exploration of these issues with the consideration of an influential interpretation of Hume's perspective of the problem of necessary connection: namely, that of Immanuel Kant. For Kant's views can serve as a useful steppingstone in our journey towards a clear, and accurate understanding of Hume's position. Which is not to suggest that Kant's interpretation of Hume is entirely dependable either. While not false, what appears to be Kant's views on the matter, at least as far as I see it, are not altogether adequate. In the first place, as section one of this chapter will attempt to show, Kant's account of Hume's problem does not appear to be especially cohesive. However, there is a second, perhaps more fundamental problem with Kant's perspective of the issue that concerns Hume. For a case can be made, as I shall go on to argue in section two, that Kant's interpretation of Hume's problem underrepresents, if not entirely overlooks a consideration that can be shown to be central to Hume's enquiry into the problem of necessary connection. More particularly, it appears that Kant, and others, have undervalued Hume's predilection - perhaps 'obsession' is the more appropriate term - for clarity, where his investigation of the metaphysical problem of necessary connection is concerned. How then does Kant see Hume's problem?

Section one: On Kant's interpretation of Hume's problem.

4. Kant lays great store by Hume's discussion of necessary connection. In the introduction to his Prolegomena he admits frankly that the problem of necessary connection, as articulated by Hume, 'was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction'. (Kant 1976: 8) Furthermore, besides his personal indebtedness to Hume, Kant also suggests that metaphysics in general stands to gain a great deal from Hume's philosophical investigations into the problem of necessary connection. For 'nothing has ever happened which could have been more decisive to its fate than the attack made upon it by David Hume...'(Kant 1976: 5) But this attack from Hume, that has been induced by his skirmishes with the problem of necessary connection, still needs to be 'carefully nursed and developed', continues Kant, if 'its smouldering fire' is to throw any light on the species of knowledge known as metaphysics. This, ostensibly, is the role assigned to the Critique of Pure Reason - an enquiry that Kant himself depicts as 'the execution of Hume's problem in its widest
extent'. (Kant 1976: 9) How then does Kant view this issue that he deems so important? While the bulk of his remarks on this issue constitute a positive portrayal of Hume's problem, Kant has also characterized the issue negatively. Let us begin with a consideration of the negative notes, before looking at Kant's more extensive, though qualified, positive construals of Hume's problem.

5. There can be little doubt that Kant is intent on drawing the attention of at least the metaphysicians to Hume's problem of necessary connection. But not any attention. Not only does he want metaphysicians to attend to this problem, but from remarks made in the introduction to his Prologomena, it appears that Kant desires they view the problem in the correct light. For where philosophers have attended to Hume's problem, they have invariably, intimates Kant, preferred solutions that are wide of the mark. Supplementing his general rebuke, alluded to in the previous paragraph, that metaphysicians have hitherto accorded Hume's forays into the problem of necessary connection with indifference, Kant raises a fairly specific objection against the interpretation relied on by those philosophers that have considered Hume's problem. As he sees it, those few philosophers who have deigned to consider the issue - namely, Reid, Oswald, Beattie and Priestley - have all misunderstood the issue that the author of the Treatise placed on the map:

Hume suffered the usual misfortune of metaphysicians, of not being understood. It is positively painful to see how utterly his opponents, Reid, Oswald, Beattie, and lastly Priestley, missed the point of the problem...(Kant 1976: 6)

Being even more specific, Kant goes on to assert that the problem, or question 'was not whether the concept of cause was right, useful, and even indispensable for our knowledge of nature, for this Hume had never doubted; but whether that concept could be thought by reason a priori. (Kant 1976: 6/7) What is more, these philosophers have exacerbated matters by appealing to common sense to solve what they took to be Hume's problem, and consequently, have not 'penetrated very deeply into the nature of reason' - the avenue that they ought to have explored in order to 'satisfy the conditions of the problem'. (Kant 1976: 7) This 'subterfuge', as Kant derogatorily puts it, that allegedly has been committed by Hume's critics, if seen in its true colours, is 'but an appeal to the opinion of the multitude, of whose applause the philosopher is ashamed, while the popular
charlatan glories and boasts in it'. (Kant 1976: 7) In short, while Kant requests that Hume's problem be placed on the metaphysicians' map, he appears to be in favour of the proviso that the problem be viewed in a specific manner. And as his remarks against the so-called common sense philosophers Reid, Oswald, Beattie and Priestley clearly indicate, Kant has no doubts about the merits of the interpretation philosophers have relied on so far in their research into Hume's problem: for this approach turns out to be little more than a 'convenient method of being defiant without any insight'. (Kant 1976: 7)

6. The assumption present throughout this broadside from Kant against the so-called common sense philosophers seems to be the view that there is a correct interpretation of Hume's problem. For Kant appears to be suggesting here, albeit implicitly, that the (allegedly) unacceptable solution proposed by the common-sense philosophers has its roots in the failure of these philosophers to understand Hume's problem. And this failure, presumably, has been brought on by the adoption of an interpretative framework that is inappropriate, or incorrect. The claim that Reid, Oswald, Beattie, and Priestley have misunderstood the issue by missing 'the point of the problem', with his further suggestion that the question is not as they see it, suggests that these philosophers would not have gone awry in their responses to Hume's problem had they been equipped with, and used, the means to correctly understand the problem. That is to say, had these philosophers not drawn on the conceptual framework of common sense in their enquiries, but relied on a different interpretative scheme, rather than the scheme which led to their current superficial reply, they could have developed a more insightful response to Hume's problem.² So Kant's implicit suggestion, as I see it, is the proposal that certain interpretations of Hume's problem are inadequate, better incorrect, and that there is a correct way to see, and thus understand this problem. Setting aside for the moment the wider, and more fundamental issue on the viability of the view that a problem lends itself to one interpretation rather than another, let us now take a closer look at Kant's own perspective of Hume's problem.

7. Broadly speaking, Kant provides us with two sets of formulations of Hume's problem - the one, as it happens, more accessible than the other. The earlier Critique of Pure Reason accounts of the issue are general, fairly technical renditions, that turn out to say more on the potentialities of his problem than on the issue itself. On the other hand, while the versions proffered by Kant in the Prolegomena appear to be more specific than
those presented earlier, what is not clear is whether or not these are all presentations of the same problem. In order to determine the congruency between Kant's conception of Hume's problem and that articulated by Hume, we will need to reconcile these different Kantian formulations of the problem. To begin with, consider the account given by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Presented under the heading 'The General Problem of Pure Reason', after extolling the virtues of gathering 'a number of investigations under the formula of a single problem' (Kant 1978: 55), he maintains that

the proper problem of pure reason is contained in the question: How are *a priori* synthetic judgements possible? That metaphysics has hitherto remained in so vacillating a state of uncertainty and contradiction, is entirely due to the fact that this problem, and perhaps even the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgements, has never previously been considered. Upon the solution of this problem or upon a sufficient proof that the possibility which it desires to have explained does in fact not exist at all, depends the success or failure of metaphysics. Among philosophers, David Hume came nearest to envisaging this problem, but still was very far from conceiving it with sufficient definiteness and universality. He occupied himself exclusively with the synthetic proposition regarding the connection of an effect with its cause (*principium causalitatis*), and he believed himself to have shown that such an *a priori* proposition is entirely impossible. (Kant 1978: 55)

What are we to make of these remarks? As it stands, this is not a very helpful account of the problem that underlies Hume's views of necessary connection. The nearest that Kant comes here to articulating Hume's problem is when he asserts that Hume 'occupied himself exclusively with the synthetic proposition regarding the connection of an effect with its cause (*principium causalitatis*)' (Kant 1978: 55) But this is a vague statement that in my view, gives us little, if any indication of Hume's problem. Even if we overlook the importation of Kant's (problematic) distinction between analytic and synthetic judgements and propositions, the question remains, what is the precise nature of this apparent preoccupation of Hume's with the synthetic proposition alluded to here by Kant? More particularly, what is the question that Kant thinks so occupied Hume?
8. Now it can be argued that the last passage cited above from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, while admittedly silent about the specifics of Hume's question, at least contains material that can be used to construct a likely Kantian response to the interpretative question raised in the previous paragraph. For here Kant intimates that the question that expresses Hume's problem is a less precise and universal formulation of a question that has been made explicit in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: namely, the question 'How are *a priori* synthetic judgements possible?' While denying that Hume envisaged this, apparently 'the proper problem of pure reason' (Kant 1978: 55), Kant has suggested that Hume could have succeeded in discovering this problem. But for his preoccupation 'with the synthetic proposition regarding the connection of an effect with its cause', and his failure to be more definite - and in this context, this is likely to be Hume's failure to draw on the analytic/synthetic distinction - Hume might have succeeded where others had failed. Given these views on the relationship between the so-called proper problem of pure reason and Hume's problem, Kant's implicit suggestion then appears to be that Hume's problem can be expressed by the question, 'Are *a priori* synthetic judgements on the connection of an effect with its cause possible?'

9. Now it can be argued that this might not be the question that Kant thinks best expresses Hume's problem - and thus, that we have still not grasped Hume's problem. In the first place, this rendition does not appear to be entirely adequate, given that Hume, as Kant sees it, 'believed himself to have shown that such an *a priori* proposition is entirely impossible'. (Kant 1978: 55) If Kant is correct here on Hume's view on the status of the synthetic *a priori* proposition regarding the connection of an effect with its cause, it would surely be otiose to wonder how this proposition is possible, Why bother to ask how this proposition is possible when you believe that it is not possible? However, there is a second set of objections that can be raised against the proposal above on the nature of the question that Kant thinks best articulates Hume's problem. For the suggestion above on the nature of Hume's problem, and derivatively of his question, can qualify as an acceptable rendition only if at least the following two conditions are met: firstly, that indefinite and definite questions can be synonymous; and secondly, that the above (presumably definite) question is entirely synonymous with Hume's (allegedly indefinite) question. For we need to remember that Kant maintains that Hume failed to envisage 'the proper problem of pure reason' because he did not conceive it 'with sufficient definiteness and universality'. (Kant 1976: 55) Which suggests that the
question that occupied Hume, for Kant, was not only pursued too narrowly by Hume, but given his failure to use the synthetic/analytic distinction, was indefinite to begin with. But in that case, it appears that Kant has failed to even consider, let alone to satisfy either of these requirements. So, the proposal above that we determine the Humean forefather of the so-called general problem of pure reason by exploiting the ancestral relationship between the two issues, may well stop short of the sought for question, and thus its problem. For it appears that with this procedure, we do not end with an (allegedly) indefinite question - that Kant thinks underlies Hume's metaphysical research - but with a question that draws on Kant's (allegedly) definite distinction between analytic and synthetic judgements. In short, it seems that an extra step is called for, if we wish to reach Hume's question - a step from the definite to the indefinite. Unfortunately, Kant fails, at least in his *Critique of Pure Reason* - or so it seems - to show us how to take this additional step to determine the question that best captures Hume's problem. However, he has raised this issue of Hume's problem elsewhere. And as it happens, his *Prolegomena to any future metaphysics* proves less reticent on this score. Perhaps this is where we will find what we are looking for.

10. We have already seen that the *Prolegomena* contains a fairly definite statement of the nature of Hume's problem. For among Kant's criticisms of the common-sense philosophers Reid, Oswald, Beattie and Priestley, is the categorical assertion that Hume is not raising their question on the use of the concept cause, but that his is the different question, 'whether that concept could be thought by reason *a priori* ...'(Kant 1976: 7) Not content with this brief annunciation of the problem, Kant immediately continues - presumably in an attempt to throw further light on Hume's issue, and to help clarify his statement of Hume's problem - by articulating what he appears to view as logical extensions of the central problem that occupies Hume:

   The question was not whether the concept of cause was right, useful, and even indispensable for our knowledge of nature, for this Hume had never doubted, but whether that concept could be thought by reason *a priori*, and consequently whether it possessed an inner truth, independent of all experience, implying a perhaps more extended use not restricted merely to objects of experience. This was Hume's problem. (Kant 1976: 6/7)
So for Kant, Hume's problem is more complex than, and different from that envisaged by Hume's common-sense opponents. Not concerned with the utility or correctness of the concept of a cause, Hume's prime focus, as Kant sees it, is on the question of the viability of this concept in an environment bereft of experience: that is to say, the question is whether or not this concept can be operated on, or 'thought by reason a priori'? This question however, suggests Kant - or so it appears - leads Hume into other, subsidiary concerns. For if it can be shown that the concept can continue to function in the a priori realm of the understanding, without what is taken to be its lifeblood - namely, experience - the ancillary question arises of whether or not this concept cause possesses 'an inner truth, independent of all experience'? And if this latter suggestion holds, muses Kant, the boundaries of application of this concept may encompass more than merely the 'objects of experience'. i.e. the concept may have a wider use than was previously believed to be the case. In short, it appears that Kant views Hume's problem as a conglomerate of at least three separate, yet logically related issues. These component issues for Kant, can be expressed by the following questions:

a) Can the concept cause 'be thought by reason a priori'?
b) Does this concept possess 'an inner truth, independent of all experience'?
c) Is this concept applicable to objects that cannot be experienced?

11. This account of Hume's problem, even though it is more forthcoming than that presented in the Critique of Pure Reason, still leaves a lot to be desired. For one thing, assuming that my rendition of his views is correct, what is the precise relationship, for Kant, between what he appears to suggest are the three aspects of Hume's problem? Is it, as I have maintained above, one of logical subserviency? That is to say, is Kant claiming that the question on the possibility of the concept cause being 'thought by reason a priori' is of prime concern to Hume, and that the other two issues, though logically related, are subsidiary; or are all three of equal concern for Hume, according to Kant? Or is it perhaps some other ranking? His use of the phrases 'consequently' and 'implying' in the passage quoted above from the Prolegomena strongly suggests, I submit, that for Kant the component issues of Hume's problem form a hierarchy, with the first issue cited - i.e. my question a) - as the most fundamental issue. But if Kant is claiming that question a) is the central component of
Hume's problem, his subsequent remarks on the nature of Hume's problem prove puzzling, to say the least. For Kant asserts - *immediately* after his tripartite account of the problem that allegedly concerns the author of the *Treatise* - that Hume's prime focus, better his *exclusive* focus is on an issue that appears to be very different from any of those already articulated. For Kant now suggests that Hume is exploring the question of the origin of the concept cause, *and no other question*, when he deals with his problem:

The question was not whether the concept of cause was right, useful, and even indispensable for our knowledge of nature, for this Hume had never doubted, but whether that concept could be thought by reason *a priori* ... This was Hume's problem. It was solely a question concerning the origin, not concerning the indispensable need of using the concept. (Kant 1976: 6/7, my underlining)

This is very confusing! Having just outlined what appears to be a tripartite account of Hume's problem, Kant goes on to boldly assert that Hume is focussed exclusively on one question. So what is it? Does Kant believe that Hume's is a *complex* problem requiring the resolution of three questions, or is his view that it is a *simple* problem that involves only one question?

12. But is this not mere nit-picking, one may wonder? Surely it is of little, if any consequence whether or not Kant thinks that Hume is dealing with a complex or simple problem? And even if we deem it important, has Kant not already indicated, albeit implicitly, how he views the issue? For we have already seen that the *Critique of Pure Reason* presents what appears to be the suggestion that Hume is concerned with the issue on the possibility of *a priori* synthetic judgements on the connection of an effect with its cause. Is this not to suggest that Kant views Hume's as a single issue problem i.e. as a simple problem? Admittedly, some interpretive manoeuvres were required to reach this suggestion, so we must be cautious in attributing this perspective of Hume's problem to Kant. But there clearly is at least some support for this interpretation, and thus the suggestion that for Kant, Hume is pursuing a simple problem. So, the fact that Kant later in the *Prolegomena* explicitly tells us that Hume's problem only concerns the question on the origin of the concept cause, far from dismayng us, ought to be welcomed. For these remarks surely serve to further the suggestion that Kant endorses the view that Hume is dealing
with a simple problem?

13. This counter, unfortunately, does not eliminate our difficulties with Kant's view of Hume's problem. If anything, it channels our concerns into murkier, and even deeper waters. For even if we overlook what appears to be the conflicting evidence from the *Prolegomena*, and grant that Kant subscribes to the view that in essence, Hume's is a simple problem, we are still left with the crucial issue: what precisely is Kant's view of Hume's (simple) problem? For it appears that the *Prolegomena* rendition of Hume's problem is that Hume is after the origin of the concept cause, while the suggestion from the earlier *Critique* appears to be that Hume is concerned with the viability, or possibility of a particular type of judgement. Now these do appear to be two separate concerns. And while I do not want to suggest here that these two views cannot be reconciled, it remains to be seen precisely how Kant can, and does relate the two positions. Admittedly, knowledge of the source or origin of an entity can prove useful in determining the behaviour of that entity in specific environments. For instance, knowledge that the fish in the tank before me comes from the fresh waters of the Amazon in tropical central Brazil can prove useful in predicting its viability in the frigid currents of the Pacific ocean off the coast of Alaska. So the two proposals alluded to by the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Prolegomena* respectively need not be viewed as necessarily mutually exclusive interpretations of Hume's problem. Having said this, though, the objection remains: Kant still needs to show us how to reconcile his proposals that Hume is after the origin of the concept cause and intent on determining the possibility of the *a priori* synthetic judgement on the connection of an effect with its cause. For the failure to satisfy this requirement not only entails that our command of Kant's view of Hume's problem can be further refined, but perhaps more important, exposes Kant to the charge that his account of Hume's problem is incoherent.

14. To the best of my knowledge, Kant has not, in either the *Critique of Pure Reason* or the *Prolegomena*, attempted to reconcile these seemingly separate accounts of Hume's problem. Which is not to say that he has not attempted to meet this requirement elsewhere, or to suggest that it cannot be met. As has been intimated above, the issue appears to be open - at least for the time being. I shall not pursue this issue any further here. Rather than attempt to construct a Kantian reconciliation of these interpretations of Hume's problem - something better suited to a work on Kant - I shall explore an issue more pertinent to this essay: namely, the
accuracy of either of these interpretations of Hume's problem. Are any of Kant's suggestions here on the nature of Hume's problem correct? For an answer to this important question we need to return to the Treatise and Enquiry, in an attempt to uncover Hume's account of the issue. What then has Hume to say on the problem that apparently interrupted Kant's dogmatic slumbers, and gave his 'investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction'? (Kant 1976: 8)

Section two: Hume's account of the problem.

15. There is an important preliminary issue that must be dealt with before considering the details of Hume's views on the nature of the problem of necessary connection. Throughout this chapter, and especially the previous section on Kant, an underlying assumption has been that Hume is exploring a single issue: namely, that he is attempting to solve the problem of necessary connection. This assumption manifests itself most forcefully when we consider Kant's account of Hume's analysis of necessary connection. In his version of this analysis, Kant suggests - as has been intimated above by the discussion in the previous section - that Hume's investigations and his resultant (allegedly sceptical) thesis on necessity are rooted in a single problem. While it appears that Kant vacillates between the view that this problem is simple and the view that it is complex, it nevertheless seems that for Kant, where necessary connection is concerned, Hume is exploring one problem. This is borne out by the fact that when Kant alludes to Hume's analysis of necessary connection, he invariably resorts to the singular. For instance, after the Prolegomena admonishment against the common-sense philosophers, Kant is insistent: 'This was Hume's problem. It was solely a question concerning the origin, not concerning the indispensable need of using the concept'. (Kant 1976: 7, my underlining) And later he writes about 'the conditions of the problem' - not 'of the problems' - while two pages on we find Kant proclaiming that he has solved Hume's problem, and that he anticipates difficulties for his solution to this problem:

But I fear that the execution of Hume's problem in its widest extent (namely, my Critique of Pure Reason) will fare as the problem itself fared when first proposed. (Kant 1976: 7, my underlining)

But is this how Hume views the issue(s) that motivate his account of
necessary connection? That is to say, does he regard the so-called problem of necessary connection as a single issue - whether simple or complex - or does he view it as a plurality of issues? While it can be shown that an initial consideration of the evidence favours the first proposal, a more circumspect investigation of Hume's discussion reveals fairly strong support for the alternative suggestion that Hume is dealing with a plurality of interconnected issues. As I shall argue below, Hume's analysis involves both questions on the nature of 'the problem', and most important, questions on the means for resolving 'the problem of necessary connection'. To begin with, let us consider the proposal that Hume subscribes to the thesis that the problem of necessary connection is a single issue.

16. There clearly is support for the 'single issue' interpretation. When Hume finally presents his account of necessary connection in the Treatise he does so only after making a fairly extensive detour through a number of ancillary issues. Finding that his initial forays into the idea of causality are impeded by difficulties surrounding the idea of necessary connection, Hume proposes that we

leave the direct survey of this question concerning the nature of that necessary connexion, which enters into our idea of cause and effect; and endeavour to find some other questions, the examination of which will perhaps afford a hint, that may serve to clear up the present difficulty. (T 78, my underlining)

But what is the referent of 'the present difficulty', that has been alluded to here by Hume? He tells us: it is the 'question concerning the nature of that idea necessary connexion which enters into our idea of cause and effect'. (T 78, my underlining and insert) From this it appears that while Hume is interested in, and subsequently pursues a number of interrelated issues - those 'some other questions' that he will endeavour to find - in essence there is one question that concerns Hume, where necessary connection is concerned, and this is the question on the nature of the idea of necessary connection. What is more, when he ultimately completes his investigation of these ancillary issues, and prepares to present his account of necessary connection, the constituents of which have been gleaned from his prior ancillary investigations, Hume returns to the very same issue that interested him earlier:

Having thus explain'd the manner, in which we reason beyond
our immediate impressions, and conclude that such particular causes must have such particular effects; we must now return upon our footsteps to examine that question, which first occur'd to us, and which we dropt in our way, viz. What is our idea of necessity, when we say that two objects are necessarily connected together. (T 155, my underlining)

All this suggests that Hume's is a single issue: namely, the problem on the nature of the idea of necessary connection. That is to say, it appears that the overriding issue, if not the only issue for Hume - at least where necessary connection is concerned - is this one on the nature of the idea of necessary connection. But ought we to accept this suggestion? Perhaps not, for the following reasons.

17. As we have seen in Chapter Two, Hume's view of necessity is not a straightforward, or conventional position. Now if we assume that there is some relationship between questions and responses such that responses regarded as unorthodox are signs of questions one would view as non-conventional, the implication seems to be that Hume's allegedly unorthodox - or as he puts it, paradoxical (T 166) - thesis on necessary connection has been elicited by a question that is itself viewed as unorthodox, or paradoxical. But Hume surely does not regard the question, 'What is our idea necessary connection, when we say that two objects are necessarily connected together?' - that he raises at the beginning of his analysis of necessary connection - as an unorthodox question. For the view that words are associated with ideas was a thesis that was entrenched in the philosophical community at large by the time the Treatise discussion on necessity and its later version in the Enquiry appeared on the scene. This view on ideas and words, that had been most explicitly articulated and defended by Locke some forty years earlier in his Essay concerning human understanding (1690), was surely common-place, at least among philosophers, by the time Hume presented his radical thesis on necessary connection. Given that Hume perceives his thesis on necessary connection as paradoxical or unorthodox, it seems likely that the question that directly elicits his response is not this one on the nature of the idea of necessary connection, but some less conventional question. What would appear to be more apposite is some paradoxical question for Hume's paradoxical thesis on necessity. So, if we accept the suggestion that Hume views the problem of necessary connection as a single issue, the apparent incompatibility between his thesis on necessity and the question proposed
above on the idea associated with the term 'necessary connection' appears to undermine the specific suggestion above that Hume is solely concerned with a problem on the nature of the idea of necessary connection. Or more positively, this incompatibility suggests that Hume views the problem of necessary connection as a complex problem, constituted by at least two separate components. And in that case, a more radical proposal arises: perhaps the focal point of Hume's investigations into necessity, despite his aforementioned references to the question on the nature of the idea of necessary connection, is some other issue - or issues? Let us pursue this option.3

18. As it happens, when Hume finally develops his account of necessary connection, he does appear to be driven by a different, and most important, unconventional formulation of the question referred to above on the nature of the idea of necessary connection. This guiding influence over his deliberations manifests itself most explicitly in two areas. To begin with, a central thesis of necessary connection that Hume defends in his analysis is couched in terms of the origin or source of the idea of necessary connection. As I argued previously, in the second section of Chapter Two - Hume concludes his analysis with the suggestion that a specific psychological disposition or sentiment is the source of the idea of necessary connection. As he puts it in the Enquiry, 'this sentiment is the original of that idea which we seek for'. (E 78, my emphasis) Or as he maintained earlier in the Treatise, when briefly outlining his strategy for resolving the problem of necessary connection:

Similar instances are still the first source of our idea of power or necessity; at the same time that they have no influence by their similarity either on each other, or on any external object. We must therefore, turn ourselves to some other quarter to seek the origin of that idea. (T 164, my emphases)

Admittedly, this is an intriguing passage that raises a number of issues. However, most of them can be overlooked here. But what is important in this context, is the quite explicit proposal from Hume that the initial failure to discover the source of the idea of necessary connection ought not prohibit further explorations for the source, or origin of this idea. As he says, the initial failure notwithstanding, 'we must therefore, turn ourselves to some other quarter to seek the origin of that idea'. This suggests that where the formulation of his views on necessary connection are
concerned, Hume is strongly influenced by questions on the *source* of the idea in question. This pervasive influence, however, also manifests itself in other areas of Hume's investigations into necessary connection. For when he attempts to defend his thesis on necessity, the investigation that Hume conducts is significantly influenced by considerations that concern the origin or source of the idea of necessity. The rejection of his rivals' views on necessary connection - and hence the subsequent preparation for his positive construals - rests, to a large extent, on Hume's rejection of their views on the source of the idea of necessary connection. In short, what might be called the source-paradigm appears to feature prominently in Hume's analysis of the problem(s) of necessary connection. And this, in turn suggests that the question(s) that engenders this analysis - that is to say, the linguistic framework relied on by Hume to address the problem(s) - is itself influenced by the source-paradigm. This view is further borne out by a consideration of comments made by Hume at the outset of his investigation into necessity.

19. When Hume raises the question on the nature of the idea of necessary connection, he does so within a specific context: namely, in order to gain a clear understanding of the more embracing notion of causality. In his desire to comprehend - as he puts it, to be able 'to explain fully' (T 74) - the notion of causality, Hume is compelled to learn about necessary connection. Intent on comprehending the notion of causality, Hume suggests, better, he insists that we adopt a procedure that for him will help to 'explain fully' the notion of causality, and most important from our point of view, will aid in the elucidation of the idea of necessary connection. As he sees it, we ought to determine the source of an idea if we intend to adequately understand that idea:

we must consider the idea of *causation*, and see from what origin it is deriv'd. 'Tis impossible to reason justly, without understanding perfectly the idea concerning which we reason; and 'tis impossible perfectly to understand any idea, without tracing it up to its origin, and examining that primary impression, from which it arises. The examination of the impression bestows a clearness on the idea; and the examination of the idea bestows a like clearness on all our reasoning. (T 74/5, my underlining)

This is a very strong proposal from Hume. Unless we determine and
examine the origin of the idea, we cannot acquire a complete understanding of the idea in question: for then it is 'impossible perfectly to understand any idea'. (T 74/5) So the source-paradigm, according to Hume, must function as the cornerstone of any attempt to acquire a perfect understanding of an idea.

20. All of which suggests that Hume's investigation of the problem(s) of necessary connection is influenced by at least two, and as it turns out, interconnected, perspectives or paradigms: one on the nature of the idea of necessary connection, the other on the origin or source of this idea. And as he further maintains that knowledge of the nature of the idea of necessary connection must be founded on knowledge of the origins of that idea, his implicit suggestion here seems to be not only that these two paradigms are compatible, if not congruent, but that the source-paradigm is more fundamental than the nature-paradigm, if I can put it like this. For his claim is that the results from research into the origin or source of the idea of necessary connection must constitute the basis of research into the nature of the idea. But what has the quest for the origin of an idea to do with an enquiry into its nature? And why must the one kind of research activity rest on the other type of research? Or to put it more pointedly, why must we 'see from what origin' ideas, such as that of causality or necessary connection are derived, if our intention is to perfectly understand the nature of the idea? Intuitively, these appear to be disjoint, if not incongruous enterprises. Without further clarification, Hume's claim that it is 'impossible perfectly to understand any idea, without tracing it up to its origin' (T 74/5) appears to be implausible, if not false. Admittedly, knowledge of the origin of an item can prove useful in learning about that item. For instance, if I know that the letter in my hand was written and posted in London by my touring wife, I might be able to guess at some of its contents: there is bound to be at least some information of her tour through the British capital in that letter. But is it the case that complete knowledge of the contents of that letter necessarily presupposes knowledge of its origins? Surely not. For what can the knowledge of a letter's origin reveal about the contents of a letter, that cannot be gleaned from the letter itself? Little, if anything, or so it seems. So why does Hume stipulate that complete knowledge, or as he puts it, 'perfect understanding' of the idea of necessary connection requires us to trace this idea 'up to its origin'? Or more broadly, why does Hume deem the source-paradigm essential to attempts to acquire a perfect understanding of the idea of necessary connection? In order to formulate an adequate response to this question, we need to consider Hume's views
on the status of research into philosophical issues, especially that of the problem of necessary connection, prior to the publication of the *Treatise*.

21. Hume introduces his *Treatise* with a lament. For him, the theories, or as he calls them, the systems that philosophers have hitherto developed 'want of coherence in the parts, and of evidence in the whole': so much so, that the theories 'of the most eminent philosophers...have drawn disgrace upon philosophy itself'. (T xiii) This malaise, apparently, is so conspicuous that one does not require the sagacity of a philosopher 'to discover the present imperfect condition of the sciences, but even the rabble without doors may judge from the noise and clamour, which they hear, that all goes not well within'. (T xiv) But why are the sciences in such disarray? Hume's response is twofold. In the first place, the issues that philosophers grapple with are intractable, confined as they are to the relatively inaccessible plane of the abstract:

> For if truth be at all within the reach of human capacity, 'tis certain it must lie very deep and abstruse; and to hope we shall arrive at it without sufficient pains, while the greatest geniuses have failed with the utmost pains, must certainly be esteemed sufficiently vain and presumptuous. (T xiv/xv)

Secondly, Hume suggests that past philosophers have been haphazard in their pursuit of these demanding issues, thereby compounding the difficulties. Not only are the issues abstract, and consequently difficult to resolve, but the methodology previously relied on by philosophers, for him, has proved piecemeal and ought to be replaced. For the method that has traditionally been relied on by philosophers is a 'tedious lingering method' (T xvi), little likely to direct research to the most fundamental issues: namely, those concerning the science of man. And given that Hume's view is that 'the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences' (T xvi, my emphasis), philosophical research - such as that conducted by his predecessors - that draws on the traditional methodology, will apparently lack the standing and most important, the surety that could otherwise be attained. For unless the science of man is accorded a central position in our philosophical investigations, contends Hume, the results of our research will remain indeterminate: 'There is no question of importance, whose decision is not compriz'd in the science of man; and there is none, which can be decided with any certainty, before we become acquainted with that science'. (T xvi) These qualms about the standing of past research into
philosophical issues in general, manifest themselves fairly graphically in Hume's views on past research into the problem of necessary connection.

22. When Hume introduces his analysis of the problem of necessary connection in section xiv of Book I of the Treatise, he does so in a manner reminiscent to that of the overall introduction of the work. For he again draws attention to the acrimonious debates that allegedly mark previous excursions by philosophers into metaphysics. But this time Hume is more specific by suggesting that a good deal of the controversy centers on the problem of necessary connection. Asserting that the question on the nature of power or necessary connection is 'one of the most sublime questions in philosophy' - an abstruse question that has long been the source of vigorous debates between philosophers - he goes on to maintain that there is no question, which on account of its importance, as well as difficulty, has caus'd more disputes both among antient and modern philosophers, than this concerning the efficacy of causes, or that quality which makes them be follow'd by their effects. (T 156)

And as with his general diagnosis of the shortcomings of his predecessors' philosophical investigations, Hume finds fault with the way in which philosophers have traditionally conducted their research into this problem. Their methodology is flawed, suggests Hume, because these philosophers have not given due weight to the science of man in their investigations. In particular, as Hume sees it, these philosophers have entirely overlooked issues from the science of man that involve basic questions on the constitution of the human mind: namely, those questions that concern the nature of the metaphysical ideas we have, such as that of necessary connection:

   But before they enter'd upon these disputes, methinks it wou'd not have been improper to have examin'd what idea we have of that efficacy, which is the subject of the controversy. This is what I find principally wanting in their reasonings, and what I shall endeavour to supply. (T156)

But why ought metaphysicians concern themselves with this, presumably psychological - and thus possibly irrelevant - issue? Is this not an issue for
psychologists, rather than for investigators of the constitution of reality? So, how serious a shortcoming on the part of Hume's predecessors can this omission be, one may wonder? Even if we grant Hume that the perfect understanding of an idea is a prerequisite for reasoning justly on some issue, surely the failure to explicitly enquire into the idea of necessary connection simply means that one cannot claim to be certain or confident about one's understanding of the idea, and thus that one cannot claim to be sure about the justness of one's reasonings on necessary connection. And surely Hume does not want to suggest that researchers that lack what he deems to be adequate levels of confidence about their views on the nature of the idea of necessary connection are thereby precluded from acquiring insights, if not perfect insights into necessary connection itself? So what hinges on an enquiry into the nature of the idea of necessary connection, for Hume, other than perhaps questions on the levels of confidence of the researchers?

23. Hume does not appear to view the (alleged) failure by his predecessors to consider the nature of the idea of necessary connection as a minor shortcoming. On the contrary, as he sees it, this is a fundamental flaw of his predecessors' inconclusive investigations into necessity. For their failure to consider this issue has purportedly prevented them from learning about factors that prove crucial to our ability to acquire knowledge in metaphysics. In particular, this omission has precluded past philosophers from learning about two related principal shortcomings of the human mind: namely, the mind's inability to securely grasp ideas, let alone abstract ideas, and its disposition to transpose similar ideas. As Hume sees it the mind, at best, 'has but a slender hold' of abstract ideas, such as that of necessary connection. Furthermore, abstract ideas 'are apt to be confounded with other resembling ideas'. (E 21) One would think that the regular use of the terms 'power' and 'necessary connection' is a sign that these terms are being used competently, and that they are associated with constant, clear and precise ideas. In Hume's parlance, given the wide currency of these terms, 'we are apt to imagine [that each of these terms] has a determinate idea, annexed to it'. (E 22) However, nothing could be further from the truth! For there 'are no ideas, which occur in metaphysics, more obscure and uncertain, than those of power, force, energy, or necessary connexion, of which it is every moment necessary for us to treat in all our disquisitions'. (E 62) And given that Hume's view is that the 'chief obstacle...to our improvement in the moral or metaphysical sciences is the obscurity of the ideas, and ambiguity of the terms' (E 40), the failure to explicitly investigate
the idea of necessary connection can have dire consequences for any attempt to erect a theory of necessary connection. In short, the suggestion seems to be that had Hume's predecessors considered this issue on the nature of the idea of necessary connection, they would have been alerted to some of the treacherous obstacles that await researchers into this problem, and perhaps into metaphysics at large. And more to the point, Hume's implicit suggestion here seems to be that an awareness of these impediments to metaphysical research will act as a deterrent to the formulation of overly ambitious theories of necessary connection.

24. What is more, it turns out that Hume even suggests that an enquiry into the idea of necessary connection is the best antidote there is for overrating the capacities of the mind, and by implication, for making excessive claims in metaphysics. For he asks rhetorically, towards the end of his *Enquiry* analysis of this idea: 'what stronger instance can be produced of the surprising ignorance and weakness of the understanding, than the present?' (E 76) All this seems to suggest - at least as I see it - that Hume views the failure by previous philosophers to explicitly investigate the idea of necessary connection, and thus their failure to learn about its shortcomings, as a significant determinant - if not the source - of their perpetuation of (allegedly) inconclusive false accounts of necessary connection. This gives rise to an interesting possibility: perhaps these views on his predecessors' (allegedly haphazard) approach to the problem of necessary connection, and on the weakness of the mind influence Hume's own analysis? As I see it, there is a good deal of support for this suggestion. For there are unmistakable traces of these considerations in two areas vital to Hume's analysis: namely, in his characterization of the problem of necessary connection, and equally important, in his views on the criteria that must be met by any successful resolution of this longstanding problem. To gain a sound grasp of Hume's conception of the problem of necessary connection we need to consider both of these facets of Hume's discussion. To begin with, consider some of the finer details of Hume's own account of the problem of necessary connection.

25. When Hume provides us with his own perspective of the problem of necessary connection, he does so in a revealing manner. For he suggests that the problem, that has long been the source of interminable debates in philosophical circles, can be reduced to a rigorously decideable issue: namely, to a decision over two, and only two clearly delineated options. In fact, Hume goes as far as to suggest that the problem of necessary
connection can be depicted as a problem of deciding between two mutually exclusive options, neither of which is particularly desirable. That is to say, Hume's proposal is that the problem of necessary connection can be depicted as a dilemma. In an important passage from the *Treatise*, he both explicitly indicates that this is his perspective of the issue, and suggests some of its basic components. Early in the section 'Of the idea of necessary connection', Hume asserts that

Ideas always represent their objects or impressions; and *vice versa*, there are some objects necessary to give rise to every idea. If we pretend, therefore, to have any just idea of this efficacy, we must produce some instance, wherein the efficacy is plainly discoverable to the mind, and its operations obvious to our consciousness or sensation. By the refusal of this, we acknowledge that the idea is impossible and imaginary; since the principle of innate ideas, which alone can save us from this dilemma, has been already refuted, and is now almost universally rejected in the learned world. (T 158, my emphasis)

With no access to the thesis of innate ideas - a thesis that presumably 'has been already refuted' by the first book of Locke's *Essay*, and has thus fallen from favour 'in the learned world' - the claim that we 'have any just idea' of necessary connection, from Hume's point of view, ultimately compels us to decide between two unambiguously articulated disjuncts: either we accept that our original claim is false and that 'we have no idea of necessity, or necessity is nothing but that determination of the thought to pass from causes to effects and from effects to causes, according to their experience'd union'. (T 166) Embracing what appear to be two variants of the priority principle - namely, the theses that 'ideas always represent their objects or impressions; and *vice versa*, there are some objects necessary to give rise to every idea' (T 158) - Hume maintains that the claim that one is operating with a just idea of necessary connection inevitably leads to a decision between two, and only two, stark choices. Now philosophers are surely not wont to opt for the first disjunct, given their irrepressible inclination to 'reach discoveries unknown to former ages'. (E 12) But if, in their attempts to preserve the meaningfulness of the term 'necessary connection' - a term Hume views as fundamental to 'all our reasonings concerning matter of fact or existence' (E 76) - these philosophers accede to the suggestion that necessary connection is nothing but a specific determination of the mind (T
166), they end up endorsing a highly controversial thesis little likely to win over many converts. For as Hume sees it, this latter thesis is a paradoxical view of necessary connection that, given 'the inveterate prejudices of mankind', is unlikely to 'have admission' without a good deal of 'solid proof and reasoning'. (T 166) So there appears to be a high price to be paid for solving the problem of necessary connection, and thus of helping to quell 'the noise and clamour' (T xiii) that has marked the disputes of earlier metaphysical excursions. For the adoption of a framework that generates a (presumably desirable) rigorously decideable format for the problem, as Hume sees it, apparently engenders a (presumably undesirable) solution.

26. It is important to note that an integral component of the framework that Hume brings to bear on the problem of necessary connection is his priority principle. For unless he adopts the view - or one of its variants - that 'all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv’d from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent' (T 4), his insistence that 'we must produce some instance, wherein the efficacy is plainly discoverable to the mind', if 'we pretend...to have any just idea of this efficacy' (T 158), would be misguided. If this symbiotic relationship in fact does not hold between ideas and impressions, one need not 'produce some instance' of efficacy in order to substantiate the claim that one has a just idea of necessary connection. For now other means of justifying this claim become possible - if not necessary. Furthermore, with this requirement out of the way, the failure to 'produce some instance' of efficacy, does not necessarily entail that the idea we claim to be just really 'is impossible and imaginary'. (T 158) However, not only is the priority principle an integral component of the framework that Hume relies on to address the problem of necessary connection, the evidence suggests that he attributes the success of this perspective to the presence of this principle. For he suggests that it is this principle that generates rigorously decideable issues for philosophers, thereby making the issues far more accessible than would otherwise be the case. One good illustration of this view of Hume's is his early Treatise assessment of the issue on the existence of innate ideas.

27. When Hume first raises the innate thesis, as he does in the first section of Book 1 of the Treatise, given the immediate context - which is one where he articulates and endorses the priority principle - one might have thought that he would either conclude that this thesis is false, or at least suggest that it is indeterminate. For if the claim is that there are innate
ideas, such as the ideas of extension, colour, passion and desire, as proponents of the thesis assert is the case, given the priority principle, there would be a concomitant obligation on these adherents of the thesis to produce the impression(s) that generated these ideas. But in this section Hume neither asserts that the thesis of innate ideas is false, nor claims that the thesis is indeterminate. What he does do is revealing, since he explicitly draws attention to the standing of the questions involved in the debate over innate ideas. For he suggests that the priority principle can transform the innate ideas debate into a resolvable issue. According to Hume, we are now in the position to generate a question that, at last, is amenable to some resolution. As he puts it, when we apply the priority principle to this issue we produce a clear question, and 'I hope this clear stating of the question will remove all disputes concerning [the problem of innate ideas]' (T 7). This virtue of the priority principle is expressed in a more general form later, in an entry in the Enquiry:

Here, therefore, is a proposition, which not only seems, in itself, simple and intelligible; but, if a proper use were made of it, might render every dispute equally intelligible, and banish all that jargon, which has so long taken possession of metaphysical reasonings, and drawn disgrace upon them. (E 21, my emphasis)

But the priority principle, that constitutes a cornerstone of the framework that Hume suggests we rely on when addressing problems in metaphysics, especially when articulating the problem of necessary connection, also proves vital to his uncompromising views on the criteria that must be met by any successful resolution of the problems in metaphysics, such as the longstanding problem of necessary connection. Let us turn our attention to Hume's account of these criteria.

28. Having suggested that the problem of necessary connection can be depicted as a dilemma, constituted by two precise, if somewhat unsavoury possible solutions, Hume proceeds to specify the criteria that any solution to this problem must satisfy. The claim that we 'have any just idea' of necessary connection, according to Hume, given the acceptance of the priority principle, gives rise to a dilemma from which we can be rescued, provided certain conditions are met. Fortunately, suggests Hume, somewhat surprisingly, given his suggestion that the ('already refuted') thesis of innate ideas 'alone can save us from this dilemma' (T 158, my emphasis),
we need not despair, for we can still be extricated from its horns. The demise of the thesis of innate ideas need not overly concern us, intimates Hume, for we still have one viable option open: namely, to search for and hopefully discover 'some natural production' that can be viewed as the source of the idea of necessary connection. But not any source will do. No. Only that source which meets specific criteria that Hume spells out in no uncertain terms. For this source must be 'plainly discoverable to the mind, and its operations obvious to our consciousness or sensation'. (T 158) Given that 'moral ideas are apt, without extreme care, to fall into obscurity and confusion' (E 61), Hume insists that if we intend to finally solve the problem of necessary connection - and by this he means, be saved from the dilemma - our present business, then, must be to find some natural production, where the operation and efficacy of a cause can be clearly conceiv'd and comprehended by the mind, without any danger of obscurity or mistake. (T 158, my emphasis)

Acutely aware of the innumerable 'failures' by philosophers to solve the problem of necessary connection, and with the obscurity of the idea of necessary connection indelibly impressed on his mind - as I have shown above - Hume is emphatic that the source proffered for the idea of necessary connection must itself not contain a vestige of contention, if the problem of necessary connection is to be solved once and for all. Hence his suggestion that the so-called 'natural production', that is sought as the source of the idea of necessary connection, must be a phenomenon that the mind can grasp without any difficulty. This is a fundamental consideration for him: when the source of the idea of necessary connection is eventually discovered, not only must it be 'some natural production', but most important, this natural phenomenon must be clearly conceivable and comprehensible by the mind. As he stipulates, the source of the idea must be a natural phenomenon that 'can be clearly conceiv'd and comprehended by the mind, without any danger of obscurity or mistake'. (T 158, my underlining)

29. In the light of all this, there can be little doubt that Hume's views of the problem of necessary connection and of its solution are strongly influenced, if not determined by his concerns about obscurity. For very definite traces of these considerations, as I have tried to show above, are to be found in both his conception of this problem, and in his account of the criteria to be
satisfied if the problem is to be successfully dealt with. To be more specific, from my analysis above it appears that this concern over obscurity, and the concomitant demand for clarity and rigour by Hume, underlies his adherence to a framework that Hume deems essential for the resolution of a hitherto intractable metaphysical problem. But it is not only the problem of necessary connection that stands to gain from the judicious application of the framework endorsed by Hume, with its priority principle. For metaphysics at large, as he sees it, can benefit as well. Without this framework, that gives such prominence to the priority principle, intimates Hume, metaphysics is bound to remain in its twilight state, as philosophers brazenly dispute over issues 'very deep and abstruse'. (T xiv) For as Hume points out, the failure to extirpate obscurity from our ideas, and hence from our reasonings on matters metaphysical, will inevitably 'get us into fairy land, long ere we have reached the last steps of our theory; and there we have no reason to trust our common methods of argument, or to think that our usual analogies and probabilities have any authority. Our line is too short to fathom such immense abysses'. (E 72)

Notes.

1. According to Locke, the idea of necessary connection or power, especially that of active power, 'we have only from reflection on what passes in ourselves'. (Essay: II, xxi, 4)

2. While Kant dismisses the utility of the common-sense framework in metaphysics, he does not deny its value altogether. Even though his view is that common sense will not prove adequate where precision is called for - and for Kant, metaphysical investigations require accuracy - common sense still has its uses:

   Chisels and hammers may suffice to work a piece of wood, but for etching we require an etcher's needle. Thus common sense and speculative understanding are each serviceable, but each in its own way: the former in judgments which apply immediately to experience; the latter when we judge
universally from mere concepts, as in metaphysics, where that which calls itself, in spite of the inappropriateness of the name, sound common sense, has no right to judge at all. (Kant 1976: 7/8)

3. Some may find the assumption articulated here on the relationship between questions and answers, irrespective of its innocuous appearance, unwarranted. As the subsequent discussion attempts to make clear, however, there is still strong independent evidence for a viable alternative interpretation of the issues that motivate Hume's analysis.

4. Which is not to say that Hume does not think that the thesis of innate ideas is false. As we saw earlier in the chapter, Hume maintains that 'the principle of innate ideas...has been already refuted, and is now almost universally rejected in the learned world'. (T 158)
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