

HUME, REFORM, AND THE PERFECT COMMONWEALTH:

**AN ATTEMPT TO SHOW THAT HUME'S "IDEA OF A
PERFECT COMMONWEALTH" OUGHT TO BE TAKEN
SERIOUSLY.**

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THIS THESIS IS THE CANDIDATE'S OWN WORK.
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ABBREVIATIONS, CITATIONS, PAGE REFERENCES, AND EDITIONS OF HUME'S WORKS
USED IN THIS TEXT:

- D Dialogues concerning Natural Religion, in The Natural History of Religion and Dialogues concerning Natural Religion, edited by A. W. Colver and J. V. Price, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976. For page references in text: D followed by page number.
- E I An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding, in Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, (second edition by P. H. Nidditch), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902. Cited in text as first Enquiry. For page references in text: E I followed by page number.
- E II An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, in Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, (third edition by P. H. Nidditch), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975. Cited in text as second Enquiry. For page references in text: E II followed by page number.
- Essays Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary, edited by Eugene Miller, (revised edition), Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987. Cited in text as Essays. For page references in text: Essays followed by page number.
- H The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688, 6 volumes, reprint of 1778 edition with a foreward by W. B. Todd, Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1983. Cited in text as The History of England. For page references in text: H followed by volume number and page number.
- HGB The History of Great Britain: The Reigns of James I and Charles I, edited by Duncan Forbes, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970. For page references in text: HGB followed by page number.

- L I First volume of The Letters of David Hume, 2 volumes, edited by J. Y. T. Grieg, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932. For page references in text: L I followed by page number.
- L II Second volume of The Letters of David Hume, 2 volumes, edited by J. Y. T. Grieg, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932. For page references in text: L II followed by page number.
- LG A Letter From a Gentleman to his friend in Edinburgh, edited by E. C. Mossner and J. V. Price, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967. Cited in text as Letter from a Gentleman. For page references in text: LG followed by page number.
- NHR The Natural History of Religion, in The Natural History of Religion and Dialogues concerning Natural Religion, edited by A. W. Colver and J. V. Price, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976. For page references in text: NHR followed by page number.
- T A Treatise of Human Nature, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, (second edition by P. H. Nidditch), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978. Cited in text as Treatise. For page references in text: T followed by page number. This edition also contains Hume's An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature. Cited in text as Abstract. For page references in text: T Abstract followed by page number.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to show that Hume's 1752 essay "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" ought to be taken seriously in the sense that Hume wrote this essay in the hope that the republican form of government it describes and recommends, a republican form of government "modelled with masterly skill" (Essays 528), would one day be established in Britain.¹ Now this is not at all a fashionable position to take with respect to this essay of Hume's. As far as I know, only three scholars have taken the Perfect Commonwealth to be a practicable possibility for Hume: John Plamenatz, John Robertson, and J. B. Stewart.² The large majority, however, deny this. For example, Shirley Letwin tells us that Hume wrote "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" because he thought it would be "amusing to see if one could sketch a better mode [of perfect government] than Harrington's."³ David Miller has no doubt that, for Hume, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" was "an idle curiosity" and not a "practical advocacy of change"⁴, while Frederick Whelan labels this essay a "speculative exercise" on the part of Hume, a piece of "abstract republicanism." According to Whelan, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" was, for Hume, "almost a jeu d'esprit."⁵ And Annette Baier doubts whether Hume "was ...sure that it [i.e. the Perfect Commonwealth] could be tried in Britain."⁶ Others (Nicholas Phillipson, Duncan Forbes, Donald Livingston) do not tell us directly that Hume did not intend "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" to have a serious place in his thought. But by attributing to him ideas and positions which, for one reason or another, make it impossible to take this essay seriously, they can also be seen as holding that Hume wrote "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" as an amusement or as a speculative exercise.⁷ Thus, in arguing that Hume wrote "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" in order that it would have

a practical impact on the British public, we are going against prevailing opinion.

Now, anyone wanting to argue that Hume hoped that his Perfect Commonwealth would one day be implemented in Britain must deal with a number of important questions. Was Hume a political reformer? If so what type of a reformer was he, conservative or radical? That is, was he a piecemeal reformer, advocating reforms which never deviated in any significant way from what the public had inherited from its ancestors? Or was he a wholesale reformer, advocating the complete reorganization of society? Did Hume the reformer (if in fact he was a reformer) wish to remain essentially loyal to society's beliefs, practices, institutions, and the principles underlying them? Or did he wish to start de novo, uprooting both fundamental principles and the beliefs, practices, and institutions founded upon them? Further, what type of reform is "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" itself, conservative or radical? Do the reforms advocated in this essay seek to take the British public significantly beyond what it knows, or do they remain loyal to the principles of the existing British polity and its well-established and conventional beliefs, practices, and institutions? Finally, is the nature of the reformism embraced by Hume (assuming he was a reformer) consistent with the nature of the reforms advocated in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth"?

These questions are important for us, for if there is no evidence that Hume was a reformer, then clearly any talk that he wrote "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" so that the reforms it recommends might one day be implemented in Britain is nonsense. But even if we establish that Hume did in fact have reformist intentions, we cannot automatically take "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously, for it might turn out

(as some argue, as we shall see in a moment) that Hume was a conservative reformer while the establishment of the Perfect Commonwealth would require radical reform. In other words, it might turn out that there is no harmony between the type of reformism that Hume embraces and the type of reform that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is, in which case it would be impossible to take this essay seriously.⁸

Was Hume a political reformer? Some think not. J. S Mill portrays Hume as "prefer[ing the existing]...order of things",⁹ while Leslie Stephan has him advocating "stagnation" in the political realm.¹⁰ And Letwin holds that since, for Hume, "there was much less difference between forms of government than it seemed", Hume's message was: "[D]o not seek an ideal polity, but seek to safeguard the existing form of government against the weaknesses inherent in it."¹¹

Recently, however, two important scholars in the area of Hume's political thought, Whelan and Miller, agree that we can talk about Hume the political reformer.¹² But both take him to be a conservative reformer, and we shall see why later. Whelan claims that Hume displays "the desirability of preserving whatever seems to be of value in what exists and otherwise of cautious and incremental reformism." He labels Hume's approach to political reform "conservative utilitarianism", and tells us that this is a type of "conservative reformism [which] concerns a presumption of utility to be accorded to received opinion and well-established institutions."¹³ Miller attributes a stronger form of conservative reformism to Hume. He thinks that, for Hume the reformer, there is a "need to preserve existing conventions, and to innovate when necessary in such a way that these conventions are least disturbed." Reform must take place, but it must be "carried out without disturbing existing habits." Reforms must never stray far from the

familiar, but "must remain closely tied to [society's] conventionally-accepted judgements."¹⁴

The fact that these scholars attribute to Hume a form of conservative reformism is important. For they both take "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" to be (for Hume) a radical reform.¹⁵ But if this is so, that is, if Hume was a conservative reformer while at the same time he thought that the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain would involve wholesale, radical reform, then "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" can be safely shelved as a piece of entertainment or speculation, and Hume could not have been serious about the practicality of his perfect form of government.

But not everyone who takes Hume to be a reformer labels him a conservative reformer. Plamenatz thinks that Hume allows "broad... improvement" in the political realm and "great though gradual [political] changes." He thinks that, for Hume, "[i]nnovation can be large and yet beneficial, provided it is slow and cautious".¹⁶ Plamenatz's view that Hume allows broad improvements, great changes, and large innovations is a clear indication that he attributes to Hume a form of non-conservative reformism. But what form? What, for Plamenatz, is a broad improvement, a great change, a large innovation? He doesn't tell us. And because he doesn't tell us we cannot know the exact nature of the non-conservative reformism that he ascribes to Hume.

John Robertson is equally unclear. Distinguishing between reformers and revolutionaries, Robertson tells us that Hume belonged to the former group and not to the latter. Both reformers and revolutionaries have as their end governmental change. However, both seek this end through different means, revolutionaries through sudden, violent change

and reformers through careful and gradual change.¹⁷ Given that Robertson labels Hume a "reformer", and that, for Robertson, reformers do seek to change government, it seems safe to say that he takes Hume to be a non-conservative reformer.¹⁸ But by telling us next to nothing about how he understands the term "reformer", Robertson (like Plamenatz) gives us no insight into the character of Hume's (non-conservative) reformism.

John Christian Laursen is convinced that Hume's thought "is...best characterized as a contribution to reform politics, rather than as quietist or conservative", and complains that "[t]oo many commentators conclude that Hume's ideas are 'conservative' without seeing the many ways in which they can be reformist, liberal, and even radical."¹⁹ For anyone interested in the subject of "Hume the reformer" such remarks are tantalizing. Unfortunately, however, Laursen does not develop them in any detail.²⁰ What does he mean by "conservative", "reformist", "liberal", and "radical"? These are vague, ambiguous terms, and because Laursen doesn't explain them, we cannot know what he means when he tells us that Hume was not a "conservative", but a "liberal, and even radical" reformer.

So, while Plamenatz, Robertson, and Laursen hold that Hume was a non-conservative reformer, all fail to give us any insight into the nature of the non-conservative reformism that they claim Hume embraced. But this is not their only failure. For, at the same time, all fail to deal with the important question of how Hume can be a non-conservative reformer. Why this question arises, and why it is important, will become clear later in this "Introduction".

Like Plamenatz, Robertson, and Laursen, J. B Stewart claims that Hume

was a non-conservative reformer.²¹ However, unlike them, he develops this idea in some detail. Stewart does not argue that Hume was a radical reformer (in the sense in which I defined this term earlier). This would be absurd, for as we shall see there is no room for radical reformism in Hume's thought. Rather, recognising that Hume is "[a]lways a moderate",²² Stewart places him somewhere between conservative and radical reformism (as I have defined these terms). According to Stewart, there is room in Hume's thought for "radical reforms, in our laws, policies, and constitutional arrangements." But, as such radical reforms are introduced "enough of the structure of [the] established... [must be] preserved intact."²³ In other words, Stewart's position is that, for Hume the reformer, only parts (even fundamental parts) of the existing economic, social and, political structure ought to be rubbed out, leaving an adequate or sufficient part of this structure untouched. Principles, and the institutions and practices they support, ought to be reformed where necessary, even extirpated ("in a careful, Fabian way").²⁴ But these principles and overlying beliefs and institutions must never be extirpated as a whole. Always, enough of the familiar ought to remain in place.

I agree with this interpretation of Hume. Hume is neither a conservative reformer, nor a radical one. Always the moderate, Hume lies somewhere in between. The reformism he embraces aims at wiping out parts of the established structure (where necessary), but never calls for the complete removal of this structure. For the sake of a label, I shall call this type of reformism "conservative/radical reformism" indicating both its respect for, and impatience with, elements of the established, both at the fundamental or primary level of principles and at the secondary level of the beliefs, practices, and institutions

built upon these principles.

So, unlike Plamenatz, Robertson, and Laursen, Stewart gives us a good insight into the nature of the non-conservative reformism that he ascribes to Hume. But this is not all. For he also realises that there is a problem with ascribing to Hume any type of non-conservative reformism. He knows that there are certain elements in Hume's thought which seem to (and have been taken to) restrict him to conservative reformism. (We shall briefly investigate these elements shortly.) Thus, he deals with the question of how Hume can be a non-conservative reformer, showing that the elements in question do not preclude Hume from being (what I have called) a conservative/radical reformer. Unfortunately, however, Stewart's treatment of this issue is sometimes incomplete and I hope to fill some of the gaps he has left. This is not to say that Stewart's work on the subject of "Hume the (conservative/radical) reformer" is inadequate. It is certainly not, and in this thesis I shall make much use of his discoveries in this area. However, his treatment of this subject is at times wanting and I hope to rectify this.

As I said, and as we shall see, Hume was (what I have called) a conservative/radical reformer. The important question now is whether this picture of Hume the reformer is consistent with taking "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously in the case of Britain. Is there, in the case of Britain, harmony between the nature of the reformism that Hume embraces, on the one hand, and the nature of the reforms advocated in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth", on the other? Yes. For, according to Hume (as we shall see) the reforms advocated in this essay are conservative/radical. While they will introduce into Britain principles and overlying institutions, practices, and beliefs which are

significantly new and alien, at the same time they will leave untouched many of the existing principles and institutions, practices, and beliefs of contemporary Britain. As we shall see, Hume classifies both republics and limited monarchies as "free governments". Thus, Britain, being a limited monarchy, and the Perfect Commonwealth, being a well-contrived republic, are close politically. But this is not all. For, as we shall also see, Hume thinks that there is an intimate connection between the economic, social, and political elements of a state, and that while economic and social causes have political effects, political causes also have economic and social effects. Given this latter point, and given that Britain's limited monarchy and Hume's well-contrived republic are both forms of free government, it follows that Hume's Perfect Commonwealth and eighteenth century Britain share, not only a similar political structure, but also similar economic and social structures. If this is correct, then it seems that the jump from Britain's limited monarchy to Hume's skilfully modelled or well-contrived republic will not be a violent or radical one, but conservative/radical. For, while the establishment of the Perfect Commonwealth will introduce many novelties into British society, at the same time many familiar and established economic, social, and political elements (both at the primary and secondary levels) of that society will be retained.

At this point we should outline the structure of this thesis and, in the course of this outline, bring out the problems involved in arguing that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" ought to be taken seriously.

The first two chapters of this thesis form a single unit. Together they will show that Hume was (a) a reformer, who (b) wanted to cure society from the many old, pernicious political and non-political

beliefs it was labouring under, and who was eager, not only to (c) call for the removal from society of bad practices, institutions, and beliefs (no matter how long standing they were) and advocate the introduction of new and novel ones, but also to (d) tamper with the economic, social, and political fundamentals which support these practices, institutions, and beliefs. In the first two chapters, then, we will see, not only that Hume was a reformer, but, on the basis of a number important examples of reforms that Hume sought to introduce into Britain (and which will be examined in detail in Chapter 2), that he was a conservative/radical reformer. The next three chapters will be devoted to defending this picture of Hume the reformer.

As mentioned, two important scholars in the area of Hume's political thought, Miller and Whelan, argue that Hume was a conservative reformer. Why? Because, they claim, certain fundamental elements of Hume's thought restrict him to conservative reformism. Now, if Miller and Whelan are right, then, firstly, the important examples of Hume's conservative/radical reforms to be examined in Chapter 2 will be undercut, and we will have no hope of showing that Hume was a conservative/radical reformer. And, secondly, we will have no hope of showing that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" ought to be taken seriously. Thus, it is important for us to show that it is not the case that Hume was restricted to conservative reformism and that there is room in his thought for conservative/radical reformism.

One reason why Hume has been taken to be a conservative reformer is because of his claim that "[c]ustom...is the great guide of human life" (E I 44). Whelan's treatment of this claim is important. He argues that "his [i.e Hume's] general maxim that custom is the guide of life ...has normative as well as descriptive force in all branches of Hume's

philosophy." He thinks that, for Hume, "custom is (and should be) the great guide of life."²⁵ Here we have two claims: (a) The normative one that, for Hume, past experience ought to guide future action, and (b) the descriptive one that, for Hume, people are essentially habitual creatures who in fact cling to the customary. They are, in other words, fundamentally conservative beings. In Chapter 3 we shall deal with (a).

Why does Whelan think that, for Hume, custom ought to be the standard by means of which we direct our lives? Because Hume's "study of the 'understanding'...culminated in skeptical doubts", doubts which, by his own admission, filled him with "melancholy" and "despair" (T 264). To overcome this crippling situation, Whelan continues, "Hume...turns to nature as his guide."²⁶ And what does nature offer us as a guide of life? Not reason but, as Hume's investigations of human nature reveal, custom: "'Tis not, therefore, reason which is the guide of life, but custom" (T Abstract 625).²⁷ Custom is the guide provided by nature. And, therefore, it ought to be our guide. Whelan concludes: "Hume emerges from total skepticism with an acceptance of custom as the 'great guide of human life.'"²⁸

Now, if this accurately reflects Hume's position, then, clearly, we are in trouble. For, if Hume recommended a conservative standard as our guide of life, that is, if, for him, the past ought to guide our future, and all future beliefs, practices, and institutions ought to closely resemble past ones, then, clearly, there is no room in his thought for conservative/radical reformism, in which case he could not have been serious when he put forward the various conservative/radical reforms which we will discuss in Chapter 2. Nor could he have been serious about "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". In Chapter 3 we shall

see that Hume never tells us that we ought to be guided by past experience alone. Rather, our guide of life ought to be the experimental method of reasoning, a method of reasoning which is consistent with the picture of Hume the reformer we are trying to paint.

Chapter 4 will deal with the descriptive claim that, for Hume, people are fundamentally conservative creatures who cling to their customary patterns of thought and behaviour. As Whelan puts it, for Hume, people are "primarily conservative, stable beings who derive satisfaction from routine modes of thought and behaviour." The Humean individual has "a basic affinity for custom", an affinity which is embedded in his nature.²⁹ As a result, he holds on to the established and to what he is used to. We find a similar idea expressed by Miller. The Humean individual is by nature a customary being, "a creature...of habit", so much so that once he adopts a practice and it becomes habitual he follow it "unthinkingly" and will not depart from it.³⁰

But the Humean individual's natural propensity to adhere to the customary is not the only source of his conservatism. Whelan also points to this individual's love of order and fear of the new and unknown.³¹ Further, we shall see that the Humean individual's desire for a good reputation also contributes to his conservatism.³² Over all, then, we can discern three reasons for the view that, for Hume, man is a conservative being who clings to the established: (1) a natural disposition to cling to custom, (2) a love of order and stability and fear of the new, and (3) a love of reputation.

Now, if Hume draws us a conservative picture of man, then it is nonsense to say that he put forward as practicable possibilities either the conservative/radical reforms we will investigate in Chapter 2 or "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". For, if for Hume man is a conserva-

tive being, then surely his view must be that people will resist the introduction into society of anything significantly new or novel. We shall see in Chapter 4 that, while it is true that, for Hume, the individual is the owner of a strong conservative tendency, a tendency which has its origins in the characteristics identified above, it is also true that, for Hume, this individual is the owner of a progressive tendency as well. In other words, we shall see that the Humean individual is not closed to conservative/radical reformism.

So far, we have two reasons for the view that Hume must be a conservative reformer, namely, that he recommends the past as the guide of life and that he has a fundamentally conservative conception of man. But there is third reason for this view: For Hume, society is ultimately held together by habit or custom. As Miller puts it, in Hume's view, society is founded on "an elaborate web of convention", namely, the conventional rules of justice and allegiance. These rules are in turn founded on habit, so that, if disrupted, society will dissolve and be plunged into the state of nature.³³ Thus, according to Miller, "Hume's view of the matter implies clearly that...[any non-conservative] change, by upsetting established habits [in the realms of justice and political allegiance]...is likely to be harmful."³⁴

A similar idea can be found throughout the Hume literature. Berry tells us that, for Hume, "society coheres" because of "habitually sanctioned expectations" in the areas of justice and allegiance. Without such habits there can be no society. Thus, any "innovations" in society must never disrupt these habits: "This, above all, is why Hume's social and political thought is conservative."³⁵ Whelan agrees. Given that, for Hume, "[i]t is the artificial virtues...that make orderly social life possible at any level more extensive than the

family", and given "the necessarily customary foundation of artificial moral virtues", it follows that Hume can only be a conservative reformer.³⁶ Whelan thinks that because "Hume's investigation concludes that habit or custom, both mental or behavioural, is the feature on which they [i.e the artificial virtues] depend"; because, that is, "[c]ustom is...the source of moral order in society", it follows that Hume recommends "a cautionary approach to criticism" in the realms of morals and politics, an approach which is "conservative in effect."³⁷

Haakonssen, too, stresses the significance of "regularity of behaviour", or habit, in the areas of justice and allegiance for the cohesion of Humean society, and that, as a result, reform must be conservative for Hume:

The message of Hume's theory concerning the basic features of society is that such regularity...depends upon...regular or rule-bound institutions that can guide our behaviour and consequently our expectations of each other. If such institutions, once acquired, are lightly given up, we lose habit and regularity; we lose, that is, the most important means of orientating ourselves to others."

Thus, "Hume must reject policies that significantly break the rules of justice [and allegiance]."³⁸

The idea here is clear. Since, for Hume, habitual acquiescence to the artificial virtues of justice and allegiance is responsible for society's cohesion, it follows that Hume must believe that any sort of non-conservative political reforms ought to be avoided, for such reforms can only upset the habits upon which justice and allegiance are founded, thus destroying society. If this is Hume's view, then, clear-

ly, our task in this thesis must fail. In Chapter 5 we shall see that, while it is true that, for Hume, society is held together by the customary adherence to the rules of justice and allegiance, this does not restrict him to being a conservative reformer.

By the end of Chapter 5 we will have established (a) that Hume had reformist intentions, (b) that he was a conservative/radical reformer and (c) that there is room in his thought for such reformism. In Chapter 6 we will show that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" itself is a conservative/radical reform (in the case of Britain). This is an important task for us. For if scholars are right in claiming that the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain would involve radical reform of that nation's structure, while all we can do is show is that Hume was a conservative/radical reformer, then "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" could not have been put forward by Hume as a practicable recommendation. In Chapter 6 we will see that the Perfect Commonwealth has many of the important political, social, and economic principles and overlying institutions, practices, and beliefs of Britain's limited monarchy, so that the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will not be a violent one. It will not require a radical transformation of British society. The introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will be a conservative/radical reform.

In Chapter 6, then, we shall see that there is agreement and concord between the nature of Hume's reformism and the nature of the reforms advocated in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". But this is not the only task that we shall accomplish in this chapter. We shall also see that, as a reform, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is (a) neither contrary to the natural course of things, nor (b) the result of

abstract theorising. Like the other task to be accomplished in this chapter, both (a) and (b) are necessary if we are to show that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" ought to be taken seriously. Why this is so will come out clearly as this thesis progresses.

Up until Chapter 6 we will have dealt with an important argument against taking "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously, namely, that Hume was a conservative reformer while his Perfect Commonwealth is a radical reform. By Chapter 6 we will have seen that this argument fails. In Chapter 7 we will bring together the remaining arguments scholars have given for not taking "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously and see that these arguments also fail. Finally, in Chapter 8 we will discuss how Hume thinks the Perfect Commonwealth might be established in Britain.

A final note before embarking upon our task. The reader will have noticed that there is no chapter in this thesis devoted to a detailed analysis of the constitutional arrangements of the Perfect Commonwealth. True, we shall have to touch upon these arrangements a number of times in Chapter 6, but we shall not subject these to any detailed scrutiny. The reason for this is quite simple: This is not a thesis on Hume's Perfect Commonwealth. Rather, we are concerned here with showing that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" ought to be taken seriously in the sense explained earlier. But this aim can be achieved without a point by point analysis of the Perfect Commonwealth's constitution. And this is fortunate for us, for any full discussion of the constitutional arrangements of the Perfect Commonwealth would require a work much longer than the present one. This for two reasons:

(1) In constructing his Perfect Commonwealth Hume considers a number of existing European systems of government: The Venetian (Essays 518;

Essays 524), the Polish (Essays 522), the Swiss (Essays 520-21), the British (Essays 517; Essays 520; Essays 524; Essays 525); and especially the Dutch, to which Hume tells us the Perfect Commonwealth bears a significant "resemblance" (Essays 526). He also reflects upon the small republican city-states of the past (Essays 527-28). Thus, any attempt to fully understand the arrangements of the Perfect Commonwealth must include a detailed discussion of these systems of government.

(2) In constructing his Perfect Commonwealth, Hume draws heavily upon his analyses of human nature, morality, the science of politics, socio-economic progress etc. Thus, any discussion of the Perfect Commonwealth must be preceded by a detailed discussion of these analyses. There will be some discussion of these elements of Hume's thought in this thesis, but nothing like the detailed discussion needed in order to fully understand the organisation, structure, and institutions of Hume's preferred form of government.

For these reasons, then, a point by point examination of the workings of the Perfect Commonwealth would require a much longer thesis than the present one, a thesis which would take us well beyond our word limit. Clearly, such a thing must be avoided. And it can be avoided, for, as I said, our purpose of showing that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" ought to be taken seriously can be achieved without intimate knowledge of the Perfect Commonwealth's political arrangements.

Having outlined the structure of this thesis, having stated its aim, and having given a somewhat detailed insight into the problems surrounding this aim, we can now embark upon our task. We will begin by showing that Hume was a reformer. We shall see that David Fate Norton is right in claiming that "from early days reform was the effect at which he [i.e Hume] aimed."³⁹

CHAPTER 1

A few days before his death in August 1776, Hume, lying on his death-bed, was visited by his friend Adam Smith. During that visit Hume told Smith (among other things) that, by means of his works, "I have been endeavouring to open the eyes of the Public" (Essays xlvi). In other words, on his death-bed, Hume announced that throughout his life he had a reformist aim. But in doing so Hume was announcing nothing new. For he had already revealed his reformist intentions to the world long before he uttered the above quoted words to his friend. There are, I think, three main ways in which this claim can be supported. I shall investigate all three.¹

I

The first way I want to show that Hume was a reformer involves two steps. It involves demonstrating that:

- (a) Hume intended his works to be read by the public, and
- (b) these works contain reformist prescriptions.

Now, if a philosopher desires his works to reach the public, and if these works contain reformist 'oughts', then it seems safe to conclude that that philosopher planned to reform the public. Let us look at (a) and (b) in turn.

(a) There can be no doubt that Hume wanted his works to be read by the public.² He tells us this again and again. For example, in the "Advertisement" to the first two volumes of the Treatise ("Of the Understanding" and "Of the Passions") Hume declares that "[t]he approbation of the public I consider the greatest reward of my labours" and adds that he is "determin'd to regard its [i.e the public's] judgement,

whatever it be, as my best instruction." Now, whatever else is going on here, it is clear that the first two volumes of the Treatise were written with the public in mind. This is also true of this work's third volume ("Of Morals"), in whose "Advertisement" Hume expresses the hope that he "may be understood by ordinary readers."

The Enquiries too had the public as their target, for a number of times in this work Hume expresses a concern about the relationship between the "general public" and the "common reader", on the one hand, and his philosophical task, on the other (e.g E I 6; E I 11; E II 317 fn. 1).

Another indication that Hume aimed his writings at the public comes from the concern he had with the way in which he expressed himself in his works. For example, Hume attributed the fact that the Treatise "fell dead-born from the press" to the "manner" in which he communicated his ideas in that work, rather than to its "matter". Thus, he recast the "matter" of the Treatise in a more suitable "manner" in the Enquiries (Essays xxxiv-v; L I 158). But why was "manner" important to Hume? Because he was afraid of being misunderstood by the public. If this were to happen, then how could he fulfil his "ambition...of contributing to the instruction of mankind" (T 271)? Of course, I do not want to deny that there are other reasons why Hume gave attention to the manner in which he transmitted his thoughts to the world, such as a desire for fame, a desire he called "my ruling passion" (Essays xl). However, we should not let these other considerations blind us to the fact that Hume was also interested in how he expressed himself because he was interested in being understood by the public in order to contribute to its "instruction".³

The Essays were also written with the hope that they would be read by

the public. In the "Advertisement" to this work Hume tells us of his desire to "communicate these Trifles to the Judgement of the Public."⁴ And in "Of Essay-Writing" he calls himself "a Kind of...Ambassador" from the world of letters to the sociable world (Essays 535).

We have already mentioned that on his death-bed Hume told Smith of his desire to "open the eyes of the public." But, in addition to this, he also told his friend that "I have been correcting my works for a new edition", and expressed the hope to live a little longer in order to see "how the Public receives the alterations" (Essays xlvi). Even on his death-bed, then, Hume made clear his desire to reach the public with his works.

I think that enough has been said to show that throughout his life as a philosopher, from the Treatise to his death-bed, Hume intended his works to be read outside the four walls of his study. But what motivated him to persevere in the instruction of the public? We have already mentioned his desire for fame. But this is not the whole story. According to Hume, "a man...without public spirit, or a regard to the community, is deficient in the most material part of virtue" (Essays 27). In light of this condemnation, it seems safe to say that Hume made every effort to acquire a "public spirit", and to be motivated by a concern for the "community". If this is correct, then we can say that Hume's desire to instruct the public sprang, not only from a desire for fame, but also from a genuine concern for the public's welfare and well-being.

Let us now move on to the second part of our argument, and show that Hume's writings contain reformist prescriptions.

(b) Some philosophers (e.g. Barry Stroud)⁵ take the view that Hume was solely a positivist empirical scientist. This is a mistaken view. True, as we shall see later in this chapter, Hume did see himself as a scientist of human nature, an "anatomist", conducting empirical investigations into the question of how the human mind operates. However, he did not restrict himself to this descriptive task. He also advanced his own recommendations, recommendations which had a reformist aim. In other words, not only is there a descriptive/scientific side to Hume's work, but also a normative/prescriptive side.⁶ In the next chapter we shall discuss in detail a variety of reforms advocated by Hume, all of which come from his Essays. Here I want to restrict myself to discussing two closely related reformist prescriptions, both of which are contained in the Treatise and the Enquiries, namely, Hume's advocacy of mitigated scepticism as a way of life and his call for the sovereignty of the calm passions over the violent ones.

(i) Hume distinguishes between "extravagant" (T 228) or "excessive" scepticism (or "Pyrrhonism") (E I 161), on the one hand, and "moderate" (T 224) or "mitigated" (E I 161) scepticism (which is, just "Pyrrhonism ...corrected by common sense and reflection" (E I 161)), on the other. While he has little sympathy for the former type of scepticism (we shall see why in a moment), he endorses the second type, telling us that it is the position taken by every "just reasoner" (E I 162), by the "true philosopher" (T 224), and recommending it as a way of life: "In all incidents of life we ought still to preserve our [moderate] scepticism" (T 270).

Hume was greatly distressed by the fact that "[t]he greater part of mankind are naturally apt to be affirmative and dogmatical in their

opinions...[and] throw themselves precipitately into the principles, to which they are inclined." Such people have "[no] indulgence for those who entertain opposite sentiments" (E I 161). Hume was opposed to such dogmatism, and aimed to "inspire...[people] with more modesty and reserve, and diminish their fond opinion of themselves, and their prejudice against antagonists" (E I 161). He hoped to achieve this end by infusing "a small tincture of Pyrrhonism [i.e mitigated scepticism]" into the world (E I 161). For mitigated scepticism does not foster dogmatism, but instead promotes "mild and moderate sentiments" (T 272). Thus, the mitigated sceptic never uses terms like "'tis evident, 'tis certain, tis undeniable" (T 274; T 278).

This does not mean that the mitigated sceptic holds no beliefs. As Hume says in his anonymous Letter from a Gentleman, while defending his Treatise:

All he means by these Scruples is to abate the Pride of mere human Reasoners, by showing them, that even with regard to Principles which seem the clearest, and which they are necessitated from the strongest Instincts of Nature to embrace, they are not able to attain a full Consistence and absolute Certainty. Modesty then, and Humility, with regard to the the Operations of our natural Faculties, is the Result of Scepticism; not an universal Doubt, which it is impossible for any Man to support, and which the first and most trivial Accident in Life must immediately disconcert and destroy (LG 19).

Thus mitigated scepticism breeds moderation, toleration, modesty, and the mildness of passion. It does not foster the total suspension of

belief. As the above quote makes clear, Hume thinks that such a thing is "impossible". And this is why he has little patience with Pyrrhonism, calling it "a fantastic sect" (T 183; T 228). For Pyrrhonists embrace "the excessive principles of scepticism" and call for the complete suspension of belief in all areas of life (E I 158-59). But this is impossible since "[n]ature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel" (T 183; E I 160). And as Hume himself discovers, we cannot fight nature: "I must yield to the current of nature" (T 269). Thus, we must believe since nature has decreed so.

Hume never denies the theoretical soundness of Pyrrhonism. In fact, Pyrrhonism is "impossible...to refute" (E I 159). But one can be a Pyrrhonist only in the study. In the outside world one must abandon this doctrine. As Hume says in the above long quote, "the first and most trivial Accident in Life must immediately...destroy" Pyrrhonism. And one must leave the study and join life, for nature has made man sociable. (We shall discuss Hume's idea of man's natural sociability in Chapter 4). Thus, nature, by driving us into the world, "breaks the force of all sceptical arguments in time" (T 187; E I 159).

Nature is important to Hume the mitigated sceptic. It is nature which saves him from the sceptical crisis he vividly describes in the final pages of Book I of the Treatise (T 263-74); and it is nature which serves as his guide in all areas of life. (This will come out clearly as this thesis progresses.)⁷ For example, the "true philosopher" knows that a number of important human beliefs (causality, objectivity, identity etc) have no rational foundation. Yet, he does not abandon these beliefs, for "wise nature" compels him to hold them. He (and the rest of us) cannot do otherwise: "Nature will always

maintain her rights, and prevail in the end over any abstract reasoning whatsoever" (E I 41). Thus, concerning the belief in an independently existing world, Hume declares that, after the true philosopher (i.e. the mitigated sceptic) discovers that this belief is without rational foundation, still "he must assent to the principle concerning the existence of body, tho' he cannot pretend by any arguments of philosophy to maintain its veracity. Nature has not left this to his choice, and has doubtless esteem'd it an affair of too great importance to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings" (T 187).

We shall discuss Hume's notion of belief in greater detail in Chapter 3. What is important here is that the mitigated sceptic, given that he acquiesces in "the current of nature" (T 269), does hold beliefs, but, as we have seen, these beliefs are held moderately and undogmatically, with "Modesty" and "Humility". The mitigated sceptic is cautious in his expressions of belief, making no dogmatic claims about Truth and, therefore, having no "prejudice against antagonists" (E I 161).

Now, Hume, as we saw, hoped to inject mitigated scepticism and its salutary consequences into the public realm. And in doing so he was setting himself against those people who clung to their positions dogmatically, believing (wrongly) that they had access to Truth. Among such people were: (a) "the vulgar", or the ordinary people, who, according to Hume, "take things according to their first appearance" (T 132) and do not reflect upon their beliefs (T 222-23); (b) those who embrace "false philosophy" (T 222-23; T 224), and who fill the world with "unreasonable and capricious" fictions such as "substances, and substantial forms, and accidents, and occult qualities" (T 219) and who invent theories such as the representational theory of perception and the distinction between primary and secondary qualities (T 225-32); and

(c) those who embrace "superstition" and "enthusiasm". These are "corruptions of true religion...two species of false religion", (Essays 73), and arise from different psychological conditions, the former from "[w]eakness, fear, melancholy, together with ignorance" and the latter from "[h]ope, pride, presumption, a warm imagination [and]...ignorance" (Essays 74). Although superstition and enthusiasm are religious phenomena, they also have a political dimension, an "influence on government and society" (Essays 75). In both cases, this influence is pernicious. Without going into detail, the mental condition that gives rise to superstition makes people "submissive", "tame and abject, and fits them for slavery" (Essays 78). As a result, the superstitious easily yield to the "tyranny" of priests (Essays 78-79) who, hating liberty in all its forms and desiring power (Essays 65-66), promote "oppression and slavery" (D 251). Further, given their mental condition, the superstitious "support...prerogative and kingly power" (Essays 79). That is, they tend towards despotic and absolutist political programs, including that of the Divine Rights theorists and the doctrine of Passive Obedience,⁸ a doctrine to which Hume was opposed (Essays 448-92).

In contrast, given its psychological roots, "[e]nthusiasm...is naturally accompanied with a spirit of liberty" (Essays 78; H 5 10), a liberty which is anarchic and which threatens social stability. For the enthusiast thinks of himself as "a distinguished favourite of the Divinity" (Essays 74) and, thus, is "little influenced by authority" (Essays 79). That is, he accepts no rule other than his own. He assaults all human institutions, moral, political and religious (Essays 77). Enthusiasm makes people "bold, daring and uncontrolled...and incline[s] them to arrogate, in their actions and conduct, the same

liberty, which they...[assume] in their rapturous flights and extasies" (HGB 172). Thus, enthusiasm is responsible for "the most cruel disorders in human history" (Essays 77). Hume labels as enthusiastic Puritans (HGB 172), Anabaptists, Levellers, Camisars, and Covenanters (Essays 77), people who, in one way or another, caused social disharmony in their countries by declaring war on the civil authorities.⁹

These are just some of the prevailing beliefs that Hume attacks in his writings (we shall come across more later in this thesis e.g moral rationalism, mercantilism, "severe" moralism etc), beliefs which were clung to dogmatically by their intolerant advocates. Thus, in advocating that people embrace mitigated scepticism, we can take Hume as advocating that these people abandon the established beliefs which they currently hold and embrace a new and novel outlook on life. "I make bold to recommend [true] philosophy [i.e mitigated scepticism], and shall not scruple to give it preference to superstition of every kind or denomination" (T 271). In recommending mitigated scepticism as a way of life Hume was seeking to reform the public.

(ii) Hume distinguishes between "calm" and "violent" passions (T 276; E II 239), and normatively recommends "the prevalence of the calm passions above the violent" (T 417-18; E II 239).¹⁰ This recommendation should not surprise us given Hume's advocacy of mitigated scepticism and its result (among others) of promoting the "mild and moderate sentiments" (T 271). Hume calls the sovereignty of the calm over the violent passions "strength of mind" (T 418; E II 239), that is, the ability "to resist the temptation of present ease or pleasure" and to look forward to our "more distant profit and enjoyment" (E II 239). Only when our calm passions are in control are we able to act this way.

In contrast, when the violent passions rule, we are led "to prefer whatever is present to the distant and remote" and we "desire objects more according to their situation than their intrinsic value" (T 538). Thus, the violent passions are the cause of "fatal errors in our conduct" (T 538) and force us "beyond all bounds of prudence and discretion, and to take false steps in the conduct of life, which are often irretrievable" (Essays 4). Hume complains that many attribute "strength of mind" to "pure reason and reflection." But this is wrong. Rather, this quality "is really the result of our calm passions and propensities" (E II 239).

Hume's recommendation that the violent passions ought to yield to the calm ones, is another indication that Hume was interested in reforming the public.

We are trying to establish the claim that Hume's writings contain reformist prescriptions. We have given two examples of such prescriptions, but, clearly, two examples are not enough in order for our claim to be firmly established. Thus, in the next chapter we shall look at more examples of such prescriptions. There we shall reinforce, not only the claim that Hume's writings contain reformist prescriptions, but also the claim made during our discussion of mitigated scepticism that Hume's reforms were designed to take the public beyond their established beliefs. But for now, we must be satisfied with the two examples given above and, keeping in mind what is to come in Chapter 2, we can say that Hume's works contain reformist recommendations. And since Hume wrote for the public, it seems safe to conclude that Hume had reformist intentions.

Let us now turn to the second way in which the claim that Hume was a reformer can be supported.

II

Hume was an anatomist of human nature. His aim was to "proceed in the accurate anatomy of human nature" (T 263), to "anatomize human nature in a regular manner" (T Abstract 646). Anatomy is "the science of man" (T Intro xvi), the aim of which is to "explain the principles of human nature" (T Intro xvi), to "[examine] the Mind...to discover its most secret Springs and Principles" (L I 32-33). In other words, one of Hume's purposes in his works was to conduct a descriptive, scientific analysis of the human mind in order to uncover its principles, to reveal how the mind operates.

There are a number of reasons why Hume conducts this investigation into the mind's principles and qualities. One reason has to do with his belief that the discovery of the mind's principles is important if we are to acquire knowledge in other areas of human life: "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 Intro xvi). The science of human nature, the discovery of the principles of the human mind, is the foundation of all other sciences including the "four sciences of Logic, Morals, Criticism, and Politics" (T Intro xv-xvi) and "[e]ven Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural Religion" (T Intro xv). Our inquiries into these sciences depends upon our knowledge of how the human mind operates. Thus, Hume declares that his aim is "instead of taking now and then a castle or village on the frontier, to march up directly to the capital or center of these sciences [morals, politics, mathematics etc], to human nature itself" (T Intro xvi). The science of man, or anatomy, is the "capital" of all other

sciences, and, thus, if we want to unlock these other sciences, we must first conquer this "capital".

We have just seen that Hume thinks that any successful enquiry into morals, politics etc depends upon prior knowledge of how the mind operates. But Hume also thinks that without such knowledge "[t]is impossible to tell what changes and improvements we might make in these sciences" (T Intro xv; my emphases). In other words, a further reason why Hume wants to uncover the principles of human nature is because he hopes to contribute to the improvement of the sciences of morality, politics, logic, mathematics etc. Hume's investigation into human nature was not merely contemplative. It was meant to have a practical impact, namely, to give us the knowledge we need in order that we may pursue the other sciences with greater accuracy.

But this is not the only practical effect Hume hoped his examination of the human mind would have. And here we come to what is for us the most important reason for Hume's examination of human nature. Hume believed that knowledge of the principles of the mind was essential for his role as reformer.

In a number of places in his writings Hume distinguishes between two different kinds of philosophers, namely, the "Metaphysician" and the "Moralist". To explain this distinction, Hume compares the first to an "Anatomist" (a term we have already met) and the second to a "Painter". This distinction between the metaphysician/anatomist, on the one hand, and the moralist/painter, on the other, first appeared in a 1739 letter to Hutcheson (L I 33), and was repeated in the Treatise (T 620-21) and in the first Enquiry (E I 9-10).

What is the difference between the metaphysician/anatomist and the moralist/painter? The main difference (for us) lies in their pur-

pose.¹¹ The function of the former (as we have already seen) is to uncover the principles of human nature. In contrast, the purpose of the latter is to "paint...[virtue] in the most amiable colours" in order to "please the imagination, and engage the affections" (E I 5) so that "they excite and regulate our sentiments; and...bend our hearts to the love of probity and true honour" (E I 6). The moralist "moulds the heart and affections; and by touching those principles which actuate men, reforms their conduct, and brings them nearer to that model of perfection which it describes" (E I 7). In other words, the metaphysician/anatomist is an empirical scientist. His task is descriptive. On the other hand, the moralist/painter is a reformer. He has a prescriptive task.

Now, according to Hume, the metaphysician/anatomist can play an important part in assisting the moralist/painter to achieve his task: "An Anatomist...can give very good Advice to a Painter or Statuary; and in a like manner, I am perswaded, that a Metaphysician may be very helpful to a Moralist" (L I 32; T 621; E I 10). But how does the anatomist help the painter and the metaphysician the moralist? To answer this question let us first examine the relationship between the anatomist and the painter and then use the results of this examination to shed light on the relationship between the metaphysician and the moralist.

The purpose of the painter is to depict the "Grace and Beauty" of his subject (L I 32), to produce "a Venus or an Helen" (E I 10). But in order to achieve this task, the painter, Hume thinks, "must still carry his attention to the inward structure of the human body, the position of the muscles, the fabric of the bones, and the use and figure of every part or organ. Accuracy is, in every case, advantageous to

beauty" (E I 10). And, of course, it is the purpose of the anatomist to uncover this "inward structure" for the painter. Armed with this knowledge he acquires from the anatomist, the painter is able to pursue his task in a proper fashion.

Turning now to the metaphysician and the moralist, we find an identical relationship between them. As we saw, the task of the moralist is to "bend our hearts to the love of probity" (E I 6), to shape "the heart and affections" of men in order to reform their conduct (E I 7). How? "[B]y touching those principles which actuate men" (E I 7). And whose task is it to uncover these actuating principles? The metaphysician's. He has the job of exposing human nature and revealing its operations. Thus, as in the case of the anatomist and the painter, the metaphysician helps the moralist by giving him the raw materials he needs to get on with his job. And his job is that of reforming human conduct. To do this he needs to know the psychological principles of man.

This reveals an important point about Hume's conception of the reformer: In pursuing his task the reformer must take seriously what nature has provided. His reforms must be consistent with the course of nature. This idea comes out in a number of places in Hume's writings. For example, in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" Hume attacks Plato's Republic and More's Utopia as being "plainly imaginary" on the ground that both "suppose great reformation in the manners of mankind" (Essays 514). Manners, for Hume, are founded on human nature. Thus, Hume is opposed to Plato and to More because both call for reforms which go against the principles of human nature. Again, in "Of Commerce", Hume writes: "Sovereigns must take mankind as they find them, and cannot pretend to introduce any violent change in their principles and ways of

thinking" (Essays 260). What, for Hume, is a violent change? He gives us his answer a few sentences after the above quote when he tells us that, while sovereigns ought to introduce reforms, these reforms must "comply with the common bent of mankind", that is, with human nature. Reforms which ignore human nature are violent. Thus, sovereigns can, and must, introduce reforms into the public realm, even (as we shall see in the next chapter) reforms which deviate significantly from what the public has inherited from the past. But these reforms must never ignore nature. Reformers must take human nature as their starting point, "and give it all the improvements of which it is susceptible" (Essays 260). They must be "acquainted with the nature of man...[and] expect not any impossibilities from him" (T 602). This idea that, for Hume, the reformer must take what is natural seriously is important and should be kept in mind as this thesis progresses. Let us now return to the subject at hand.

The metaphysician helps the moralist (reformer) by giving him knowledge of the principles of human nature. Now, we have already seen that Hume considered himself an anatomist, a metaphysician. Given his view about the supportive role that the metaphysician/anatomist plays with respect to the moralist/painter, and given that he saw himself as a metaphysician/anatomist, it follows that Hume saw himself as being helpful to the moralist. To the degree that the metaphysician/anatomist helps the moralist/painter (who is a reformer), Hume, in his role as a metaphysician/anatomist, is also a reformer.

But Hume's role as a reformer extends beyond that of a metaphysician helping the moralist by exposing to him the secrets of human nature. For there can be no doubt that Hume was a moralist/painter too. As we saw earlier in this chapter Hume wanted the public to embrace mitigated

scepticism and abandon zeal in favour of moderation and humility in belief. And he wanted the public to submit their violent passions to the rule of their calm ones. Of course, as with the previous argument designed to show that Hume was a reformer, more examples of Hume's reforms are necessary before this argument can be established on a firm footing. Thus, as with the previous argument, we will have to wait until Chapter 2 before we can fully embrace this argument. However, keeping in mind what is to come in Chapter 2, and already knowing about Hume's desire to promote mitigated scepticism and the sovereignty of the calm passions, we can say that Hume was not only a metaphysician/anatomist but also a moralist/painter.

Both the moralist and the metaphysician (by virtue of the support he gives the moralist) are reformers. As Hume says, "each...may contribute to the entertainment, instruction, and reformation of mankind" (E I 5; my emphasis). Hume was both a moralist and a metaphysician and, therefore, in two ways, a reformer.

III

The third and final way we can show that Hume was a reformer is by asking the question: "By means of what method did Hume the anatomist hope to discover the principles of human nature?" The answer is: "By means of the experimental method of reasoning", a method which combines "reason and experience" (T 414; E II 180) and involves "experiments...[which are] judiciously collected and compared" (T Intro xix), experiments which are subjected to "a depth of reasoning and reflection" (T Abstract 645).

According to Hume, the anatomist can embark on his task only with the

help of the experimental method of reasoning, for it is "impossible to form any notion of...[the mind's] powers and qualities otherwise than from careful and exact experiments" (T Intro xvii), that is, experiments which are carefully reflected upon. With this method of reasoning the anatomist of human nature can "render all our principles as universal as possible, by tracing up our experiments to the utmost, and explaining all effects from the simplest and fewest causes" (T Intro xvii; T Abstract 646). In other words, "by following the experimental method...[the anatomist can deduce] general maxims from a comparison of particular instances" (E II 174).

Now, Hume sees a "peculiar disadvantage" arising from trying to conduct "careful and exact experiments" in the realm of human affairs, a disadvantage not suffered by natural philosophy, namely, "that in collecting its experiments, it [i.e the science of human nature] cannot make them purposely, with premeditation" (T Intro xviii-xix). In other words, the scientist of human nature is unable to perform controlled laboratory-style experiments of the sort performed by the natural scientist. When the latter wishes "to know the effects of one body upon another in any situation" all he has to do is "put them in that situation, and observe what results from it." Clearly, the anatomist is unable to do such a thing. Instead, he must "glean up...[his] experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life, and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures" (T Intro xix). In other words, the anatomist's experiments come from careful observation of human life. But he does not restrict himself to observing present life. He also investigates past life, or history. We shall return to this point in a moment. But first we should bring

out a further problem surrounding the experimental method of reasoning.

We have just mentioned that, according Hume, the anatomist turns to history for his experiments. However, Hume complains that "[w]e have not as yet had experience of three thousand years", and that, therefore, there are not "sufficient materials upon which we can reason" (Essays 87). In other words, human experience is severely limited and, therefore, so are the experiments at the anatomist's disposal. The result, of course, is an adverse effect upon the certainty of the anatomist's discoveries: "[P]erhaps we are still in too early an age of the world to discover any principles, which will bear the examination of the latest posterity" (T 273).

Still, in spite of the fact that (a) the anatomist cannot conduct controlled experiments, and (b) the raw materials at his disposal are limited, Hume does think that the anatomist can, by means of experimental reasoning, "discover, at least in some degree, the secret springs and principles, by which the human mind is actuated in its operations" (E I 14). Other times he goes further, claiming that we "can expect assurance and conviction" in the science of man (T 273), and, therefore, "assurance and conviction" from the experimental method of reasoning. He thinks that "[t]here seems all the reason in the world to imagine that it [i.e the science of man] may be carried to the greatest degree of exactness" (T Abstract 645-46), for he thinks that "[w]here experiments...are judiciously collected and compared, we may hope to establish on them a science, which will not be inferior in certainty [to natural science]" (T Intro xix). He even talks of "eternal political truths" (Essays 21), an important claim given the dependence of politics upon the science of man. In Chapter 3 we shall return to the question of the certainty of the results yielded by

experimental reasoning and we shall see that, according to Hume, these results can be free from doubt.

As we mentioned, the Humean anatomist collects experiments, not only by observing present life, but also by investigating the past. History provides him with a wealth of material to reflect upon in order that he can accomplish his task. Thus, Hume regards history as "the great mistress of wisdom" (HGB 687). Given that "in all nations and ages... human nature remains the same in its principles and operations" and that "[m]ankind are so much the same, in all times and places" it follows, Hume thinks, that "history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular." Rather, the "chief use" of history

is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature, by...furnishing us with materials from which we may form our observations and become acquainted with the regular springs of human action and behaviour (E I 83).

For the Humean anatomist, then, history is "so many collections of experiments" by means of which he

fixes the principles of his science, in the same manner as the physician or natural philosopher becomes acquainted with the nature of plants, minerals, and other external objects, by the experiments which he forms concerning them (E I 83-84).¹²

Investigation of, and reflection upon, the past is the key to the anatomist's task. It comes as no surprise, then, that according to Hume, "[t]he object of...history [is] to instruct" (Essays 240).

Hume's desire "to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning INTO MORAL SUBJECTS" (as he announces on the title page of all three volumes

of the Treatise) is important for us. For, in having this desire he was eager to play a part in introducing a new method of reasoning into "moral subjects"¹³ and to fight against the "many chimerical systems" that presently exist (T 273), those "hypotheses embrac'd merely for being specious and agreeable" (T 272). The existing "scientific method" for investigating human nature and studying moral subjects, "where a general abstract principle is first established, and is afterwards branched out into a variety of inferences and conclusions", is pernicious and must be abandoned (E II 174). Instead, experimental reasoning should be used:

Men are now cured of their passion for hypotheses and systems in natural philosophy, and will hearken to no arguments but those which are derived from experience. It is full time they should attempt a like reformation in all moral disquisitions; and reject every system of ethics, however subtle or ingenious, which is not founded on fact and observation (E II 174-75; my emphasis).

Thus, Hume was eager to follow Locke, Shaftsbury, Mandeville, Hutcheson and Butler (T Intro xvii fn. 1; T Abstract 646) in "put[ting] the science of man on a new footing" (T Intro xvii). Like them he had nothing but "contempt" (T Abstract 646) for those who, in the science of man, present their a priori "conjectures and hypotheses" as "certain principles" (T Intro xviii). He wanted to play a part in reforming and improving the science of man by means of a new and better method of analysis, a method which, he was sure, would produce "a compleat system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new" (T Intro xvi), and thus render the science of man "superior in utility" to all

other doctrines (T Intro xix). And given that (a) the science of man is the foundation of all other sciences, and (b) the reformer depends heavily on the science of man in order to perform his task, we can say that, by seeking to introduce a new and better method of reasoning into the science of man, Hume was seeking to contribute to the improvement of all other areas of human knowledge and to help the reformer pursue his task with greater success.

IV

Our aim of this chapter has been to show that Hume was a reformer. We have made some strong moves towards this aim, but we have not fully reached it. For, as I have already noted, two of the three arguments given in order to establish that Hume had reformist intentions are lacking. In order for these arguments to work we must show that Hume's writings contain reformist prescriptions. We gave two examples of such prescriptions, but, clearly, more must be supplied. This shall be our task in the next chapter. Or, rather, it shall be one of our tasks.

CHAPTER 2

The introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will not require the complete extirpation of that nation's economic, social, and political beliefs, practices, and institutions. Nor will it require the complete extirpation of the principles underlying these beliefs, practices, and institutions. As we shall see in Chapter 6, a well-contrived British republic modelled on Hume's plan will retain many of the primary and secondary features of the eighteenth century British limited monarchy. However, the transformation of Britain into the Perfect Commonwealth will not leave everything untouched. Such a transformation will require the introduction of novelties. It will require new departures and innovations. Thus, while the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will not be a radical reform, it will be a conservative/radical reform (as I defined this term in the "Introduction"). For our purpose, then, it is not enough to show only that Hume was a reformer. We must go further and show that he was a reformer who:

- (a) did not hesitate to attack established beliefs, practices, and institutions,
- (b) did not hesitate to recommend reforms which took the British public beyond what it knew, reforms which were not conventionally-based, and
- (c) did not hesitate to tamper with the fundamentals of the state and alter these in significant ways.

We have already made some progress towards (a) and (b) in the previous chapter, where we saw that Hume was eager to combat the various false ideas that the British public was labouring under (false philosophy, enthusiasm etc), and to infuse a good dose of mitigated scepticism into the public realm. In this chapter we shall continue with (a) and (b),

and, importantly, establish (c) by looking at some of the economic, social, and political reforms that Hume proposed for contemporary Britain. As we saw, Hume wrote for the public. And he had the "ambition...of contributing to the instruction of mankind" (T 271), of "open[ing] the eyes of the Public" (Essays xlvi). Thus, we have a good ground for arguing that the reforms which will be examined below were meant by Hume to be more than just contemplative or speculative. We shall begin with the sweeping reforms that Hume calls for regarding the existing British constitution.

I

Hume thinks that the British constitution is "a good constitution" (Essays 31), producing many "happy effects" (Essays 501) and having "many advantages" (Essays 46) ("effects" and "advantages" we shall note in Chapter 6). Still, he takes it to be defective, and one of Hume's aims in his Essays is to show those who desire to retain Britain's limited monarchy that they can fulfil this desire only by subjecting the British constitution to serious reform. Before investigating the reforms proposed by Hume two issues must be dealt with. First, we must look briefly at Hume's view of the British constitution.

According to Hume, "the ENGLISH government is a mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy" (Essays 207). That is, the British constitution is a mixed constitution, made up of three elements, a monarchic (the Crown), an aristocratic (the House of Lords) and a republican (the House of Commons). But this is true only in theory. In reality, due to history and other circumstances, the aristocratic element of the constitution, Hume thinks, has become obsolete: "As to

the house of lords...both experience and reason shew, that they have no force or authority sufficient to maintain themselves alone." Any "force" or "authority" this House has, Hume thinks, is derived from the Crown (Essays 44). Thus, the Lords is not an independent branch of the constitution, which explains why Hume calls "the present" Lords "frail" (Essays 527) and why he speaks of "[t]he depression of the lords" (Essays 112).

As a result of the Lords' depression, frailty, and dependence, when Hume investigates the British constitution he talks only about "the republican and monarchical part of our constitution" (Essays 64). The former part (the Commons) champions liberty, "and think[s] no evil comparable to subjection and slavery" (Essays 64-5). The latter, on the other hand, the Crown, seeks to preserve "order and peace" and so emphasises the need to be given greater authority (thereby limiting liberty), for only greater authority will combat "sedition and civil wars" (Essays 64).

In a mixed constitution each element acts as a check or balance on the others (T 564). In the British constitution this balance is between the Crown, the Lords, and the Commons. But this is only in theory. In practice, due to the frailty of the Lords, the elements which need to be balanced in the British constitution are the Crown and the Commons. Hume thinks that, while the monarchical part of the British constitution is "great", "the republican part...prevails" (Essays 12), and that the "just balance" between the two parts which in fact make up the British constitution is "extremely delicate and uncertain" (Essays 64). How is this fragile balance between Crown and Commons maintained? How, in other words, is the current constitution kept from tearing itself apart? By means of the "influence of the

crown" (Essays 45 fn. 2), that is, royal patronage; or "we may call it by the invidious appellations of corruption and dependence" (Essays 45). It used to be that "talk of a king as GOD's vicegerent on earth ...dazzled mankind" (Essays 51), and that this reverence for the Crown was able to keep the Commons at bay. Today, however, people have undergone "a sensible change in...[their] opinions" and any talk of the king as God's lieutenant does nothing (to Hume's approval) "but excite laughter in every one" (Essays 51). Given this loss of reverence for the Crown, it is only patronage (and the sense of interest that underlays it) that prevents this branch of the constitution from being swallowed up by the Commons. Thus, royal patronage is a practice "necessary to the preservation of our mixed government" (Essays 45). This is the only means by which the current Commons can be "confined within the proper limits" (Essays 44). (Later, we shall see why Hume is desperate to keep the current Commons within its "proper limits".)

But patronage, Hume fears, is an inadequate means of holding the constitution together. For there is always the possibility that patronage will collapse. Patronage, it seems, can work only "in times of tranquillity." During times of "shock or convulsion" the life-blood of patronage, "private interest and influence", are shattered, and, since the title of King no longer commands the respect it used to, the result (during times of disturbance) can only be that "the royal power...will immediately dissolve" (Essays 51). Thus, a better way of keeping the balance between the Crown and Commons must be found.¹

This, then, is Hume's view of the constitution he wants to reform. In order to understand the reforms Hume proposes we must deal with a second point: Hume's fear of self-interest in politics.

According to Hume, people are not governed solely by self-interest:

"[T]is...rare to meet with one, in whom all the kind affections, taken together, do not over-balance all the selfish" (T 487). But this is true only in everyday life. In politics "every man ought to be supposed a knave, and to have no other end, in all his actions, than private interest" (Essays 42). Hume admits that it is "somewhat strange" that what is "true in politics" should be "false in fact", but this is how things are. For in politics, that one thing which restrains self-interest, "honour", vanishes as a result of partisan zeal and fervour (Essays 43).

Now, Hume thinks that those in power ought to rule with a view to the "public good." This "ought to be their object", their "chief business" (Essays 254).² Given this, and given the prominence of self-interest in the political realm, Hume, "sounding a strong antimonarchical note" (as Stewart puts it),³ argues that we "ought not to trust the future government of a state entirely to chance, but ought to provide a system of laws to regulate the administration of public affairs to the latest posterity" (Essays 24). In other words, in the realm of politics the domination of individual interests must be prevented by means of impersonal political structures. Only such structures can force private interests to work for the public good. But even where a government does embody such structures, every effort must be made to ensure that they operate efficiently. Thus, Hume argues that where a constitution divides authority among several bodies, it must ensure that one body can never swamp the others and govern in its own interest rather than that of the public. Such constitutions must have "particular checks and controuls" in order to make it in "the interest, even of bad men, to act for the public good." Where a constitution embodies the principle of the division of powers, but lacks the structures and

controls necessary to prevent the complete domination of one power, as was the case in the badly-contrived republics of the ancient world, then the only result can be "disorder" and the "blackest crimes" (Essays 15-16):

When there offers, therefore, to our censure and examination, any plan of government, real or imaginary, where the power is distributed among several courts, and several orders of men, we should always consider the separate interest of each court, and each order; and, if we find that, by the skilful division of power, this interest must necessarily, in its operation, concur with public, we may pronounce that government to be wise and happy. If, on the contrary, separate interest be not checked, and be not directed to the public, we ought to look for nothing but faction, disorder, and tyranny from such a government (Essays 43).⁴

Keeping in mind (a) Hume's view of the British constitution, (b) his fear of self-interest in politics and the need for rule by means of impartial structures, and (c) his call for the necessary "checks and controuls" in constitutions dividing authority among several parts, we can go on to examine the reforms Hume advocates for the British constitution, reforms which are necessary "in order to bring it [i.e the British constitution] to the most perfect model of limited monarchy" (Essays 526).

(A) We have already noted that Hume wants to prevent the current Commons from swamping the British constitution. Why? Because the Commons, "according to its present constitution", is defective (Essays

52), for it is made up of "zealots...who kindle up the passions of their partizans, and under the pretence of public good, pursue the interests and ends of their particular faction" (Essays 27). To overcome this problem, Hume recommends (a) that Britain's political parties be reformed and (b) that reforms be made to the constitution. We shall discuss the former reforms in the next section. Regarding the latter reforms, Hume calls for two changes to be made to the Commons in order to cure it of its defect.

(i) Constituencies should be made equal in terms of population (Essays 526), thus eliminating from the British political scene the 217 boroughs, most of which were sparsely populated and whose members were concerned to advance, not the public interest, but "their personal interests or those of their patrons."⁵

(ii) With the elimination of boroughs Britain would be left only with counties as electoral districts. Here, Hume recommends that the property qualification for those allowed to vote in county elections should be raised from forty shillings to property worth two hundred pounds (Essays 526). Why did Hume call for this reform? Probably for two reasons:

(a) Hume calls the current "ENGLISH electors" "an undistinguished rabble", for they lack "fortune and education" (Essays 523-24). The idea seems to be this: In those types of government which have a popular element, namely, limited monarchies and republics (both of which, as we shall see, Hume takes to be forms of "free government"), this popular element must be restricted to those people who have a strong and healthy cognitive faculty and a sound education. But in order for people to come to have these qualities they must have both "the greatest Leisure" and freedom from "providing for the Necessities

of Life" (Essays 546). In other words, they must be people of "fortune". Only such people live in those conditions and in that environment which facilitate study and education. Thus, in raising the property qualification for those allowed to vote in the counties, Hume hopes to give Britain a better type of voter, a voter who on election day will be able to make a better decision due to his "fortune" and, consequently, his "education".

(b) The second reason for Hume's dissatisfaction with the present forty shilling freehold qualification in the counties has to do with his view that this qualification does not produce independent voters. In The History of England Hume notes the establishment of this qualification in the fifteenth century with approval. However, he laments, "it were to be wished, that the spirit, as well as the letter of this law, had been maintained" (H 2 452-53). To understand what Hume has in mind here we should note that in Hume's Britain freeholders who met the prescribed property qualification were, theoretically, independent and thus could vote as they saw fit. However, in reality, few were wealthy enough to resist pressure from above and vote independently. Since voting was open, these freeholders had to be careful not to offend the great and, thus, had to vote in accordance with the wishes of those upon whom they depended for a living or for favours. When voting, then, most freeholders expressed the interests of local magnates, bishops, government patrons etc.⁶ Now, we have already noted Hume's demand that the various bodies of a free constitution be independent. But, clearly, the situation described above destroys any hope of such independence. Hume wants to rectify this by raising the current county property qualification to such a level as to ensure that county voters are independent enough so as not to fall under the influence of the

great.

(B) As a result of these changes to the Commons, Hume thinks that changes should also be made to the Lords. We have seen that Hume was worried about forms of government which divide authority among several bodies but do not prevent one faction or interest from completely swamping the others. Thus, if the changes mentioned above are made to the Commons while the Lords is left as it is, then Hume fears that this latter House will be "frail" and unable to deal with a Commons which has become "too weighty" (Essays 527). Clearly, such a thing must be prevented from happening. Thus, changes to the Lords must be made in order that it may act as a restraint on the Commons.

But this is not the only reason why Hume thinks that the Lords needs to be reformed. We saw above that, according to Hume, the current Lords depends upon the Crown for any authority it might have. Given Hume's view regarding the independence of the various bodies which make up those constitutions which embody the principle of the division of powers, it follows that the Lords must become independent of the Crown. This is necessary, Hume thinks, in order that this body can act as a restraint on the Crown. In any monarchy, absolute or limited, there must be an "independent powerful nobility, interposed between...[the public] and the monarch." Without such a "nobility" the public is "totally naked, defenceless, and disarmed." Hume laments that, at present, Britain is without such a "nobility" (H 4 370). This is dangerous, for without a "middle power between king and people...a grievous despotism must infallibly prevail" (Essays 358). Thus, Hume thinks that the Lords must be reformed, not only in order to act as a restraint on the Commons, but also in order that it can act as an independent nobility and check the power of the king.

We must pause here and expand on what has just been said in order to fully understand Hume's talk of the need for an independent nobility in Britain. According to Hume, every society, regardless of its form of government, will, as a matter of fact, be divided into ranks, for ranks "arise necessarily, because uniformly, from the necessary and uniform principles of human nature" (T 402).⁷ As we shall see, even the society of the Perfect Commonwealth will be divided into ranks. The division of society into ranks is inevitable. Now, according to Hume, in every society there will be a group of people who will receive their high rank as a result of governmental appointment. Others, however, do not derive their "authority" and "influence" "from the commission alone of the sovereign" (Essays 358). Their high rank in society is independent of the sovereign's "smile and favour" (Essays 22). Instead, it is "instituted by the hand of nature" (Essays 358). Less poetically, their authority in society is determined by one or more "of the other sources of honour" namely "[b]irths, titles, possessions, valour, integrity, knowledge, or great and fortunate achievements" (Essays 22). Which independent "source of honour" operates in any society depends upon its form of government. For example, in an absolute "civilized" monarchy it is "[b]irths, title, and place" which form this source (Essays 93), along with "hereditary riches" (E II 248) and "wit, complaisance, or civility" (Essays 126), while in a "free government" the source is "industry and [present] riches" (Essays 93; E II 249) and "capacity, or knowledge" (Essays 126). Thus, in republican Holland "the governing part of...[the] state consists altogether of merchants" (given the source of value in a republic), while in monarchical Germany, Spain, and France "the governing part...consists chiefly of nobles and landed gentry" (by virtue of the source of value under that

form of government)(Essays 207). We shall return to Hume's discussion of the relationship between form of government and rank later. For now, what is important is his view that in an absolute monarchy the nobility will form society's independently influential body, while in a free government (limited monarchies and republics) this position will be held by merchants, traders, manufacturers, that is, "the middle rank" (Essays 277).

This latter point causes problems for the interpreter of Hume. We have already noted that, for Hume, there is a need for an independent nobility in Britain in order to stand between the king and the people. Now, Britain is a limited monarchy, and Hume classifies such monarchies as free governments (Essays 10; Essays 265; Essays 493), along with republics. But free governments, we have just been told, have as their independent power the middle rank. Thus, on the one hand, Hume talks of the need in Britain for an independent power in the form of a nobility, and, on the other, we are told that in Britain, as in all nations with a free government, the middle rank will rise as that nation's independent power. How can we solve this confusion?

As we saw earlier, Hume thinks that in the British constitution the republican element prevails. Given his view about the relationship between form of government and rank, he believes that in Britain today "the chief source of distinction" is "present opulence and plenty" (E II 248-49). But the British constitution also has a monarchical element and, therefore, in Britain, titles, blood, hereditary wealth etc are also a source of rank. In other words, Hume thinks that in Britain today (given that its government is a combination of both monarchy and republicanism) "[t]he people in authority are composed of gentry and merchants" (Essays 207). This, he thinks, is how things in fact are.

But this is not how they ought to be. For, as we noted earlier, Hume thinks that in any monarchy, absolute or limited, it is the nobility who ought to be independently powerful. In other words, given Britain's form of government, both the nobility and the merchants are in authority. But given also that Britain is a monarchy, only the nobles ought to be in authority. We shall see later that Hume has a clear preference for the middle rank as society's independently powerful. But this situation must only exist in the other type of free government, a republic. In a monarchy, including a limited or free one, the nobility must form the independent power.

Hume thinks, then, that every society, regardless of its form of government, will in fact have people who have authority and influence without the sovereign's blessing. This is how things are, and this is how things ought to be. For these independently influential people "form a kind of independent magistracy in a state" (Essays 358), and such a magistracy is of the utmost importance. Why? Because without it "[n]o expedient at all remains for resisting [the sovereign's] tyranny" (Essays 358). The idea is that where there is no group who derives its authority and influence from "the hand of nature", but only from the hand of the sovereign, then there will be no one to keep a check on the activities of the sovereign. And it is important that such a check exists in society for "authority...ought never, in any constitution, to become quite entire and uncontroulable" (Essays 40). It is the function of those who are independently influential and respected to see to it that the sovereign's power is always kept within its proper limits. When the sovereign displays tyrannical tendencies, then, he will be opposed by the "independent magistracy". And, impor-

tantly, in this opposition, this independent body will be supported by the lower orders. For, "rank, and station, has a mighty influence over men" (Essays 39) and, clearly, Hume thinks that rank which is the result of the "hand of nature" rather than of the sovereign's "smiles and favours" has the greatest influence. Such people are the "leaders" of society (Essays 22), and are imitated by the rest of society. There is "[an] imitation of superiors...[by] the people" (Essays 207). Thus, society's "independent magistracy" will have the respect of the common people and will be supported and followed by them in their attempt to challenge a bad sovereign. Similarly, members of the "independent magistracy" will support a good sovereign, and in doing so they will carry the people with them (given the power of imitation).⁸

Every political society must have an "independent magistracy" in order to support the sovereign when he deserves it, and oppose him when he behaves inappropriately. In Britain, as in every monarchical form of government, this checking function ought to be preformed by an independent nobility. But, as we saw, Hume thinks that Britain has no such nobility.

What Britain needs, then, is a Lords made up of an appropriate nobility which will act as a check upon both the Commons and the Crown. At present, the balance between these two parts of the constitution is maintained by means of patronage. But, as we saw, Hume believes that under certain circumstances patronage can fail, thus bringing the constitution to an end. The best way to ensure the balance between the Commons and the Crown is by means of a strong and independent Lords.

With all this in mind we can return to our discussion and ask: What changes does Hume think should be made to the Lords so that it can properly perform its function in the constitution?

Not surprisingly, one change that is needed is that regarding the type of people, type of aristocrats, sitting in that House. What is needed is what is now lacking, namely, a Lords made up "entirely of the men of chief credit, abilities, and interest in the nation" (Essays 527), rather than of incompetent men who owe their position to fortune. Only nobles of the former type will be able to play the role of society's "leaders" and form an adequate "independent magistracy". Only they will be able to act as a balance in Britain's mixed government. Thus, Hume recommends that seats in the Lords ought not to be hereditary, but must instead be based on "the election of their own members". At the same time he thinks that an increase in the number of Lords to three or four hundred is also essential.⁹ If the Lords is to perform its role, then, not only must it be strengthened in quality, but also in quantity. Hume also thinks that the bishops ought to be removed from the Lords, along with the "SCOTCH peers". Why? Undoubtedly because this House's twenty-six bishops and sixteen Scottish representatives were fully under the control of the king's ministers.¹⁰ Thus, expelling these two groups from the Lords is essential if that House is to become an independent body. Finally, Hume declares that if any commoner is called to take a seat in the Lords he should not be allowed to refuse (Essays 527).

Here, then, we have a good example of a conservative/radical reform. Working within the existing constitutional framework, Hume is prepared to tamper with the current constitution in significant ways, extirpating old, well-established practices, and introducing new and novel ones. His reforms will fundamentally alter the complex relationship between the various parts of the constitution. They will alter the make-up of the two Houses of Parliament. And, they will provide

society with a new and better independent magistracy which will lead society in a new and better direction (given the power of imitation).

But here we should note that, according to Hume, even if these reforms were introduced, and Britain were transformed into "the most perfect model of limited monarchy", the new constitution would still be defective, it would be "still liable to three great inconveniences" (Essays 527):

(A) First, the division between the Court and Country parties would remain (Essays 527). Why? As mentioned at the beginning of this section, Hume sees the British constitution as a mixture of a republican and a monarchical element, a mixture of Liberty and Authority. As a result, parties of Liberty and Authority (i.e. Country and Court) are "involved in the very nature of our constitution" even in its most perfect form. Court and Country parties "will always subsist, so long as we are governed by a limited monarchy" (Essays 65), even a perfect limited monarchy. But why is this an "inconvenience"? Because such parties are parties of principle and such parties are violent. We shall say more about this in the next section.

(B) Second, the running of the constitution would still depend greatly upon the "king's personal character", thus creating "variable and uncertain circumstances" (Essays 527). To understand this complaint we must note that the British monarch inherits his position. But hereditary monarchy leaves too much to chance: "The power of the crown is always lodged in a single person, either king or minister; and as this person may have either a greater or lesser degree of ambition, capacity, courage, popularity, or fortune, the power, which is too great in one hand, may become too little in another" (Essays 46). But can't the power of the crown in a limited monarchy be defined in a

precise way so that it will not vary according to who is sitting on the throne? No. True, in a limited monarchy the crown is checked by the other parts of constitution. But it is never "possible to assign to the crown such a determinate degree of power, as will, in every hand, form a proper counterbalance to the other parts of the constitution" (Essays 46). As a result, limited monarchies are inherently unstable. Such instability is "an unavoidable disadvantage" of limited monarchy (Essays 46). And note that this problem cannot be overcome by transforming the hereditary monarchy into an elective one in the hope of ensuring that the monarch is of the appropriate character. For such a transformation would be disastrous. For one thing, the election of a king "is a point of too great and too general interest, not to divide the whole people into factions: Whence a civil war, the greatest of ills, may be apprehended, almost with certainty, upon every vacancy" (Essays 18; Essays 503-04). Further, it is very unlikely that the election of a monarch would bring to power a suitable person, for candidates will always "employ force, or money, or intrigue, to procure the votes of the electors: So that such an election will give no better chance for superior merit in the prince, than if the state had trusted to birth alone for determining their sovereign." Hume, therefore, concludes that "an hereditary prince...[is] the best MONARCHY" (Essays 18). But hereditary limited monarchies, as we have just seen, have their problems i.e they are inherently unstable.

(C) The final defect of a perfect British limited monarchy is the continued existence of a standing army (Essays 527). Hume prefers a militia to a standing army. The former is "the only method of securing a people fully, both against domestic oppression and foreign conquest" (Essays 509). A standing army, however, is dangerous, "the beaten

road...to arbitrary government (Essays 363). Thus, Britain's standing army is "a mortal distemper in the BRITISH government, of which it must at last inevitably perish" (Essays 647), perish, that is, into military despotism. The important question for us is why Hume thinks that even a perfect British limited monarchy will have to retain a standing army. The answer seems to be because there are many Britons who still dispute the legitimacy of the Hanoverian title (Essays 502-11). But "[a] prince, who fills the throne with a disputed title, dares not arm his subjects" (Essays 509).

Thus, even if the progressive reforms outlined above were introduced into Britain, problems would remain. Even a perfect British limited monarchy would be defective. In order to reach perfection the British should strive to implement the reforms outlined in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth", reforms which, as we shall see, are conservative/radical and will transform Britain into a well-contrived republic.

II

We noted in the previous section that, according to Hume, the current House of Commons is defective, for it is made up of men who zealously pursue the interests of their own party rather than the public good (Essays 27). Thus, those who desire to preserve the existing British constitution must reform the Commons by (a) reforming the constitution, and (b) reforming the British political-party system. We have already discussed (a). It is now time to discuss (b). This discussion is important for our purpose. For, as we have seen, Hume thinks that political parties are involved in the very nature of the British constitution. Thus, to tamper with Britain's system of political

parties is to tamper with a fundamental element of the British polity. And, as we shall see, the tampering that Hume recommends regarding Britain's existing political-party system is non-conservative in nature.

Hume had a very low opinion of political parties. They "subvert government, render laws impotent, and beget the fiercest animosities among men of the same nation, who ought to give mutual assistance and protection to each other." Thus, "founders of sects and factions [ought] to be detested and hated" (Essays 55). However, despite this contempt, Hume was prepared to accept the existence of factions in Britain. Why? Because, (a) the division of humans into factions is an inevitable result of human nature: "Factions...naturally propagate themselves [among humans]" (Essays 55); (b) limited monarchy is a form of free government, and "[t]o abolish all distinctions of party may not be practicable, perhaps not desirable, in a free government" (Essays 493; Essays 407); and (c) as we saw in the previous section, Hume thinks that parties are a natural consequence of the British constitution. Given that this constitution has a monarchical and a republican element, it follows that, "according to the various prejudices, interests, and dispositions of men, some will ever attach themselves with more passion to the regal, others to the popular part of the government" (H 6 375- 76; Essays 64-65), thus yielding parties of Authority and Liberty. For these reasons, then, Hume does not argue for the elimination of political parties from Britain. However, the parties he recommends for Britain are in important ways different from the existing ones.

Consistent with his mitigated scepticism, Hume labels himself a "friend to moderation" in politics (Essays 15), and describes his role

as one of "promoting moderation" in the realm of party politics (Essays 27). He expresses the hope to "teach us a lesson of moderation in all our political controversies" (Essays 53), for "[m]oderation is of advantage to every establishment" (Essays 500). (And here, with this talk of "promoting moderation", we have more evidence, if more were needed, that Hume wrote in order to influence the public). This political moderation is to be contrasted with "party-rage and prejudices" (Essays 87), that is, with zealous party loyalties. Hume was greatly concerned to put a bridle on the passions of the "party-zealots" (Essays 28).

In accordance with this role as an enemy of political zealotry, and true to his aim to promote political moderation, Hume announces his desire to introduce "moderation with regard to the parties, into which our country is at present divided" (Essays 27). According to Hume, his country is at present divided into two sets of parties. The first is that between Court and Country (Essays 65). But he adds that "court and country are not our only parties" (Essays 72). For the division between Whigs and Tories continues to exist. Neither was it abolished after the Revolution nor is it "now abolished" (Essays 71-72), but continues to exist and "to confound and distract our government" (Essays 69).

At this point we should say something about the relationship between these two sets of parties, a relationship which greatly complicated Britain's political-party scene.¹¹ Very briefly, by Hume's time, the modern Whigs, who had held power continuously from 1715 to 1742, had moved into the government or Court faction, while most Tories, and some old-fashioned pre-1688 Whigs, had joined the ranks of the opposition or Country faction. Now this created an odd situation. For the Social

Contract Theory (with its emphasis on liberty and the right to revolution) was a fundamental part of Whiggism, while Tories held onto the principle of the Divine Right of Kings and the related principle of Passive Obedience (with its emphasis on greater royal authority). But as members of the government or Court faction, Whigs naturally stressed the need for greater executive power, while Tories, as members of the opposition, naturally began to talk of the need to limit governmental power. In short, then, Whigs and Tories had switched languages. Hume's aim was to change this messy situation by eradicating the Whig/Tory division thus leaving Britain, not only with a Court and a Country faction, but, as we shall see, with a much improved version of this party division.¹²

Hume had no sympathy for the Whig/Tory division. As we noted, he describes this division as confounding and distracting the task of the British government. He also describes it as an "extrinsic weight" on the constitution which "turns it from its natural course, and causes a confusion in our parties" (Essays 72). And in 1763 he was glad that "the Factions of Whig and Tory" are "in a manner extinguished" (L I 385). But, as we have seen, Hume was also dissatisfied with the Court/Country division. One of the defects of the improved British constitution examined above was that this party division would remain. However, despite his dissatisfaction with the Court/Country division, Hume sought to retain it, and we shall see why later. Thus, his description of this party division is much more favourable than that of the Whig/Tory one. A number of times he describes it as Britain's only "genuine [party] division" (Essays 65; Essays 71).

Why was Hume opposed to the Whig/Tory division? To answer this question we must look at Hume's classification of political parties.

Hume divides parties into "PERSONAL" and "REAL" (Essays 56). Only the latter is important for us. He divides "real" parties into three sub-groups, "those from interest, from principle, and from affection" (Essays 59).

Parties of Interest: As the name suggests, parties of interest spring up among "distinct orders of men" (e.g. merchants, soldiers, nobles, the people etc (Essays 60)), who share the same interests, and seek to promote these in the political arena. According to Hume, such parties "are the most reasonable, and the most excusable" (Essays 59), indicating that, for him, important interests ought to be allowed to express themselves in political society. Importantly, parties of interest will exist in the Perfect Commonwealth (Essays 525).¹³

Parties of Affection: These parties "are often very violent" and are made up of those who have a love for "particular families and persons, whom they desire to rule over them" (Essays 63). The Whig and Tory parties are parties of affection: "A TORY...[is] a partizan of the family of STUART...[while] a WHIG...[is] a friend to the settlement in the PROTESTANT line [i.e. the House of Hanover]" (Essays 71). Given that the Whig and Tory parties are parties of affection, and given that such parties are violent, Hume seeks to undermine the affectional attachments of these two factions. He tries to achieve this in two ways. First, he points out, "with impartiality",¹⁴ the advantages and disadvantages of having each family as Britain's ruling family (Essays 502). By doing so, he hopes to make each side see the strengths and weaknesses of having its beloved family in power, and the strengths and weaknesses of having in power the family which is the object of its hatred. If this can be achieved, then there is a good chance that affectional attachments will loosen. Secondly, Hume directs his atten-

tion to the Tories and reminds them of two things: (a) The House of Hanover came to the throne "without intrigue, without cabal, without solicitation", but by "the united voice of the whole legislative body", and this must count for something (Essays 511). (b) Disputing the title of the Hanoverians "brings us in danger of civil wars and rebellions", but no "wise man" would want such evils visited upon his nation (Essays 511). Tories, therefore, must abandon their affection for the Stuarts. But in giving Tories this advice we can take Hume as hoping, not only to weaken the Tory affection for the Stuarts, but also the Whig affection for the Hanoverians. For Hume is convinced that "an over-active zeal in friends is apt to beget a like spirit in antagonists" (Essays 500). That is, a group, A, which zealously clings to its own position, will cause an opposing group, not-A, to do the same, thus leading to violent conflict between these two groups. But, if members of A moderate their zeal, their opponents will follow. Thus, if those affectionately tied to the Stuarts can be made to lessen this affection, then the Whig affection for the Hanoverians will also weaken.

Parties of Principle: The Whig and Tory parties are not only parties of affection, but also parties of principle. Hume gives this latter label to those factions which are founded on "abstract speculative principle[s]" (Essays 60), on "a philosophical or speculative system of principles" (Essays 465). Such factions breed nothing but strife. In fact, members of such factions cannot even pass each other "without shocking" (Essays 60). Why? Hume gives us two reasons:

(a) Hume thinks that, as a result of sympathetic perception, the human mind is able to receive the sentiments and opinions of neighbouring minds (T 317-20). Thus, "such is the nature of the human mind, that it always lays hold on every mind that approaches it" (Essays 60). As we

shall see in Chapters 4 and 5, Humean sympathy brings people together. However, this is not always the case. Sometimes sympathetic perception pulls people apart. And here we have a case in point. For once a mind sympathetically perceives that a neighbouring mind is the owner of principles and beliefs contrary to its own, it becomes "shocked and disturbed" (Essays 60-61). Minds love other minds which hold sentiments and opinions identical to their own, but hate "any contrariety ...[H]ence their impatience of opposition, even in the most speculative and indifferent opinions" (Essays 60-61).

(b) Supporters of speculatively founded sects, Hume thinks, "explain, comment, confute, and defend with all the subtilty of argument and science" (Essays 62). In other words, these supporters see themselves as owners of The Truth. As a result, they have nothing but "hatred and antipathy" for all those not on their side (Essays 63). Because each side believes itself to be in possession of The Truth and thinks that the other side is labouring under falsehood "[e]ach [side] naturally wishes that right may take place, according to his own notion of it" (Essays 60).

For these reasons, then, parties of principle cause violence. They are "the poison of human society, and the source of the most inveterate factions in every government" (Essays 62). Thus they must be opposed. Since the Whig and the Tory parties are parties of principle, Hume seeks to undermine the speculative principles upon which they are founded, namely, Social Contractarianism in the case of the Whigs (Essays 465-87) and Divine Rights theory and Passive Obedience in the case of the Tories (Essays 488-92). Hume's attack on these principles is designed to show members of each party that their principles are not "so fully supported by reason as they endeavour to flatter themselves"

(Essays 494). He hopes that by showing both factions the absurdity of their speculative principles, he will weaken the grip that these principles have on the minds of their supporters.

So far we have seen that Hume hopes to eliminate the Whig/Tory division by attacking their affectional and philosophical foundations. But undermining Whiggism and Toryism requires more than this. It is also necessary to attack the historical myths that each party had come to embrace with regard to the constitution (Essays 494). One of Hume's aims in The History of England was to dispel these myths by showing that the political system of contemporary Britain was the result of historical accidents and unforeseen circumstances.¹⁵

With their affectional, philosophical, and historical attachments eliminated, Whigs and Tories would be transformed into pure parties of Liberty and Authority respectively. But, if this is so, then the Whig/Tory division becomes obsolete, for the Country and Court factions themselves are factions of Liberty and Authority respectively. When considering the British constitution,

some will incline to trust greater powers to the crown to bestow on it more influence, and to guard against its encroachments with less caution, than others who are terrified at the most distant approaches of tyranny and despotic power. Thus are there parties of PRINCIPLE involved in the very nature of our constitution, which may properly enough be denominated those of COURT and COUNTRY (Essays 65).

And here we should remember Hume's judgement that the only "genuine" party division in eighteenth century Britain is that between Court and Country. Once Whigs and Tories are freed from their blinding attach-

ments only this "genuine" party division will remain.

It is surprising that Hume sought to retain the Court/Country division, surprising because as the above quote makes clear he considers these parties to be parties of principle. But, as we know, Hume was not a friend of factions founded on principles. Why, then, did he not call for the removal of these two factions from the British political scene?

One reason no doubt is because such parties are embedded in the very fabric of the British constitution. The constitution is a mixture of a republican and a monarchical element and, thus, naturally gives rise to parties founded on the principles of Liberty and Authority. But this explanation is not adequate, for, as we saw above, Hume thinks that, the Whig and Tory parties, once cleansed of their sentimental, philosophical, and historical attachments, are able to become pure parties of Liberty and Authority. But if this is so, then why does he not argue for the elimination of the Court/Country division and the reformation and retention of the (cleansed) Whig/Tory division?

The answer is this: Because, unlike the Whig and Tory parties, those of Court and Country are, not only parties of principle, but also parties of interest (Essays 65). Now, Hume calls parties of interest "[t]he chief support of the BRITISH government" (Essays 525) and, as we saw, he thinks that such parties are "reasonable" and "excusable" in the sense that different interests in a political society must be allowed to express themselves. In Britain these interests can find expression through the Court and Country factions.¹⁶ To remove them would be to remove an essential pillar of the British state.

Given that Court and Country parties (as parties of Authority and

Liberty) are woven into the very nature of the constitution¹⁷ (even in its most perfect form, as we saw in the previous section) and, more importantly, that, as parties of interest, they are a "chief support" of this constitution, Hume cannot call for their elimination.¹⁸ But given that such parties are also parties of principle and, therefore, inherently dangerous, Hume calls for members of both the Court and Country parties to take a number of steps to avoid the evils that parties of principle breed.

First, members must be less zealous both in the defence of their principle and in their attacks on the principle of their opponents. Court and Country members, no doubt, have no interest in seeing the current constitution dissolve. Thus, as "reasonable men" they "will agree in general to preserve our mixed government" (Essays 65). But such preservation requires that these supporters realise that both the principles of Liberty and Authority, that is, both the republican and the monarchical elements of the constitution, are essential to its continued existence. Members of each faction must acknowledge that the continued existence of the current constitution requires respect for the other faction's principle. They must cease being blinded by "particulars" (Essays 65), viciously defending their own principle and ignoring the equally essential principle of their opponents. If they continue to cling to "particulars" they will end up tearing the constitution apart. "Let us therefore, try if possible...to draw a lesson of moderation with regard to the parties, into which our country is at present divided" (Essays 27). Partisan zeal must be abandoned. Moderation is the only way forward.

Secondly, Hume calls for members of both factions to be less zealous both in the defence of their ministers and in the attacks upon the

ministers of their opponents (Essays 27-28). Hume complains that such behaviour only leads to "an extraordinary ferment" among members of both factions, which in turn has the dangerous consequence of "fill[ing] the nation with violent animosities" (Essays 28).

We noted above Hume's view that once members of a group lessen the zeal with which they cling to their position, then members of the opposing group will follow. Thus, once Court and Country supporters moderate their positions, once they lessen the zeal with which they support their principles and ministers and attack the principles and ministers of their opponents, both will achieve a moderate position with respect to each other and come to examine and sometimes even admit the criticisms of the other side (Essays 30-31).

Hume thinks that, once Court and Country members acquire respect for each other's principles and see that the principle of their opponent is essential for the continued existence of the present constitution, then there can be a true "coalition of parties", in the sense that the parties will no longer come to blows over "the essentials of government" (Essays 493). No longer will parties clash over the principles of Liberty and Authority, but only over interests. The Court and Country parties are both parties of principle and parties of interest. By embracing moderation they will cease to come to blows over principles and argue only over their competing interests. Such a situation is ideal, and such a situation will exist in the Perfect Commonwealth (Essays 525).¹⁹

Political parties (founded on the principles of Liberty and Authority) are a natural offspring of the British constitution. And parties of interest are the "chief support" of this constitution. But these elements of the British polity (as they currently exist) are defective.

Thus, Hume recommends to those whose aim it is to preserve the existing British constitution to reform these elements. He does not call for their elimination, but he does argue that they ought to be reformed in a significant and progressive way, in a conservative/radical way.

III

The subject of economics attracted a good deal of Hume's attention. And, with respect to this subject, Hume clearly reveals his desire to significantly improve the prevailing beliefs of the day:

[I]t must be owned, that nothing can be of more use than to improve, by practice, the method of reasoning on these [economic] subjects, which of all others are the most important; though they are commonly treated in the loosest and most careless manner" (Essays 304).

According to one commentator, Hume's economic writings "did much to dissipate some of the generally accepted anti-liberal economic prejudices of the time."²⁰ Whether or not it is true that Hume's economic writings did in fact have such a practical impact on the contemporary economic scene is not important for us here. What is important is the claim that, with these writings, Hume hoped to overturn certain well-established, "generally accepted", economic beliefs. To show the truth of this claim I shall, due to a lack of space, restrict myself to an investigation of Hume's treatment of two economic issues, namely (A) national wealth and (B) international trade.²¹ This investigation will draw attention to features of Hume's thought which are relevant to and important for our purpose, not only in this chapter, but in this thesis as a whole.

(A) In the area of national wealth the prevailing belief at the time was that of the mercantilists, who argued, briefly, that the wealth and prosperity of a nation is determined by its gold and silver stocks (i.e. its money). Thus, mercantilists argued that the government should institute policies which encourage the keeping of its gold and silver at home. The nation should not expend its gold and silver stocks, but, instead, seek to increase them, thus increasing its wealth.

Hume was eager to show the falsity of this position. He asks us to "[s]uppose four-fifths of the money in GREAT BRITAIN to be annihilated in one night...[W]hat would be the consequence?" (Essays 311). The consequence would not be that Britain was suddenly four-fifths poorer than the night before. Rather the result would be a decrease in all prices due to a fall in the proportion between money and goods. This change in the value of Britain's goods would increase Britain's exports, and there would be a "flowing in of money". "In how little time, therefore, must this bring back the money which we had lost, and raise us to the level of all the neighbouring nations?" Soon, the price of British goods would rise and the "flowing in of money" would stop (Essays 311).

Again, Hume asks us to imagine that "all the money of GREAT BRITAIN were multiplied fivefold in a night" (Essays 311). The result would not be that Britain was suddenly five times richer, but rather an increase in the price of British goods (since prices depend on the proportion between goods and money) and a consequent decrease in British exports and an increase in cheaper foreign imports "in spite of all the laws [prohibiting imports] which could be formed" (Essays 311). As a result, "our money [would] flow out; till we fall to a level with

foreigners, and lose that great superiority of riches" (Essays 311-12).

For Hume, then, "in the common course of nature", money will always be "proportionable to the art and industry of each nation" (Essays 312). That is, the money in the world will always flow from nation to nation until it is proportionate to the industry and commodities of each country. And this flow of money cannot be prevented: "[I]t is impossible to heap up money, more than any fluid, beyond its proper level" (Essays 312). Laws designed to restrict the flow of money are "ineffectual" (Essays 313).

Thus, mercantilists are wrong in thinking that by expending its money a nation is made poorer, or that by hoarding and increasing its money a nation is made richer. They are also wrong in thinking that such a hoarding is practicable. Money "never will heap up beyond its level" (Essays 324).

For Hume, the true wealth of a nation lies, not in its supply of gold and silver, but in its domestic industry: "[I]t is of no manner of consequence, with regard to the domestic happiness of a state, whether money be in a greater or less quantity." Rather, "real power and riches" result from "a spirit of industry in the nation" and its "stock of labour" (Essays 288). Thus, "a government has great reason to preserve with care its people and its manufactures. Its money, it may safely trust to the course of human affairs, without fear or jealousy" (Essays 326). And if a government does pay attention to its money supply, "it ought only to be so far as it affects [industry and labour-force]" (Essays 326; Essays 288).

(B) Hume complains that, today "all nations of EUROPE, and none more than ENGLAND" have put "numberless bars, obstructions, and imposts" on

free trade (Essays 324). In England, this anti-liberalism in the area of trade was due to the influence of the mercantilists. Because of their belief that a nation's wealth depends on its money supply, mercantilists feared free trade. Such a practice could always lead to an imbalance of imports over exports, and thus deplete a nation's gold and silver stocks. Hume finds this fear mistaken. As we have just seen, he believes that money will inevitably move among nations until it is proportionate to the industry and commodities of each, and the imbalance of imports over exports can only lead (for a time) to a greater "flowing in of money". Thus, the mercantilists' fear of unrestricted trade is unfounded.

Hume is convinced that trade barriers are (on the whole) harmful. For example, trade barriers are responsible for the famines in France (Essays 309). But Hume does admit that in some cases trade barriers are beneficial and must be erected. The wealth of a nation lies in its domestic industry. Thus a government must "preserve with care its people and its manufactures" (Essays 326): "A tax on GERMAN linen encourages home manufactures, and thereby multiplies our people and industry. A tax on brandy increases the sale of rum, and supports our southern colonies" (Essays 324). Tariffs which protect and encourage local industry are approved of by Hume. What he disapproves of are those tariffs which spring from a jealousy with regard to money: "All taxes, however, upon foreign commodities, are not to be regarded as prejudicial or useless, but those only which are founded on the jealousy [with regard to money]" (Essays 324).

The prevailing view that free trade is harmful because it depletes money supply and impoverishes a nation ought to be rejected. In "Of the Jealousy of Trade", Hume argues against a second long standing

argument against free trade, namely, that free trade will cause a nation harm by contributing to the prosperity and well-being of neighbouring nations. Hume has no patients with this common "narrow and malignant opinion" (Essays 328) and deploys two arguments against it.

(i) Hume reminds his readers that two centuries ago the agricultural and manufacturing arts in Britain were "extremely rude and imperfect" (Essays 328). Since then, they have greatly improved, and this improvement "has arisen from our imitation of foreigners" (Essays 328). For Hume "the emulation, which naturally arises among...neighbouring nations" is "an obvious source of improvement" (Essays 119). Thus, without the successes and advances of neighbouring nations, and without the rousing effects of imitation, "we should have been at present barbarians" and the manufacturing arts in Britain would "fall into a state of languor" (Essays 329). The prosperity of foreigners has benefited Britain in the past, and it will continue to do so in the future.

(b) As we have seen, domestic industry is important to Hume. It is the source of a nation's wealth, and has many beneficial consequences as we shall see in the next section. But in order for domestic industry to grow in size and strength there must be someone out there to buy our products: "[A] state can scarcely carry its trade and industry very far, where all surrounding states are buried in ignorance, sloth, and barbarism" (Essays 328). Thus, "if our neighbours have no art or cultivation, they cannot take [our products]...because they will have nothing to give in exchange." Just like "[t]he riches of several members of a community contribute to encrease my riches", the riches of foreign nations will contribute to the wealth of Britain (Essays 329).

In short, then, Britain has nothing to fear from free trade and the

prosperity that such trade will grant to her neighbours. In fact Britain should strive to improve the wealth of neighbouring nations. For without prosperous and wealthy neighbours the result for Britain will be no exports, no imports, and nothing to emulate, and Britain will fall into an "abject condition" (Essays 331).

If the nations of Europe continue with their "narrow and malignant politics" of tariffs and restrictions, then they will be reduced to "the same state of sloth and ignorance that prevails in MOROCCO and the coast of BARBARY" (Essays 331). Hume hopes that European nations (especially Britain) will soon drop their trade barriers. He concludes:

[N]ot only as a man, but as a BRITISH subject, I pray for the flourishing commerce of GERMANY, SPAIN, ITALY and even FRANCE itself. I am at least certain, that GREAT BRITAIN, and all those nations, would flourish more, did their sovereigns and ministers adopt such enlarged and benevolent sentiments towards each other (Essays 331).

Of all nations, Britain has the harshest trade barriers. Hume demands that these barriers be removed. What would be the result for Britain if this demand were to be put into practice? The answer is: The progressive reform of Britain's social and political institutions (given that economic causes have social and political effects). In other words, Hume's demand that Britain change her policy regarding trade can be seen as a demand for progressive social and political change. To see this, we must investigate Hume's attack on another prevailing belief of his time, namely, the evil of luxury.

IV

Commerce is important to Hume. Thus, he approves of those things that promote commerce. This is (partly) why Hume approves of luxury, for "luxury nourishes commerce" (Essays 277). But at the same time, luxury is also the result of commerce, its most significant result:

The profit is also very great, in exporting what is superfluous at home, and what bears no price, to foreign nations, whose soil and climate is not favourable to that commodity. Thus men become acquainted with the pleasures of luxury and the profits of commerce; and their delicacy and industry, being once awakened, carry them on to farther improvements, in every branch of domestic as well as foreign trade. And this perhaps is the chief advantage which arises from a commerce with strangers. It rouses men from their indolence [i.e. provides them with work, industry]; and presenting the gayer and more opulent part of the nation with objects of luxury, which they never before dreamed of, raises in them a desire of a more splendid way of life than what their ancestors enjoyed (Essays 264).

As the above quote makes clear, commerce, industry, and luxury are inextricably intertwined for Hume. We have already noted Hume's approval of commerce and his view that commerce fuels industry. We now discover that Hume extends the relationship between commerce and industry to include luxury, and together these three items have beneficial economic, social, and political consequences: "[A] kingdom, that has a

large import and export, must abound more with industry, and that employed upon delicacies and luxuries, than a kingdom which rests contented with its native commodities. It is, therefore, more powerful, as well as richer and happier" (Essays 263). Given Hume's approval of commerce and industry, and given the relationship between commerce, industry, and luxury, it comes as no surprise that in his "Of Refinement in the Arts", Hume defends luxury (or "great refinement in the gratification of the senses" (Essays 268)). And in doing so he was going against prevailing belief. By 1756 "some forty eighteenth-century periodicals had already carried out prolonged crusades against luxury."²² Luxury, it was argued, destroys morality, promotes effeminacy (thus limiting a nations ability to defend itself) and threatens the existence of the state. Hume's aim is to show that this view is mistaken.²³ On the contrary, "the ages of refinement are both the happiest and most virtuous" (Essays 269). Thus, "[the] men of severe morals" are wrong to "represent...[luxury] as the source of all the corruptions, disorders, and factions, incident to civil government" (Essays 269). In what follows I shall consider Hume's arguments against the "severe moralists" (Essays 275), and his defence of luxury (and, therefore, of industry and commerce) in detail.²⁴ This for two reasons:

(i) Such a detailed treatment will bring out a point in Hume's thought which is important for the purpose of this thesis as a whole, namely, that, in Hume's view, the modern luxurious commercial society is the best of all societies. Those who deny the value of modern commercial society, who "declaim against present times, and magnify the virtue of remote ancestors" are wrong (Essays 278).²⁵

(ii) Second, such a detailed treatment will make it clear that, for

Hume, the growth of luxury (and hence of industry and commerce) has a progressive impact upon the economic, social, and political realms of a state. Hume's defence of luxury (and hence of industry and commerce) can be seen as a defence of progressive improvement.

Hume's defence of luxury revolves around defending the "mechanical arts" (or "arts of luxury" (Essays 256)) by means of which luxury is produced. He accepts the "received notion" that human happiness is made up of three elements, "action, pleasure, and indolence" (Essays 269). Given that people are different, these elements will be (and "ought to be") "mixed in different proportions" in different people. But if any one element is lacking, then "the relish of the whole composition" will be destroyed (Essays 270). Now, Hume goes on to argue that people are happiest when they "are kept in perpetual occupation", making use of those "mechanical arts" by means of which items of luxury are produced. As a result of such work people, "enjoy, as their reward, the occupation itself, as well as those pleasures which are the fruit of their labour." Where a society has no industry, no "mechanical arts" (and, therefore, no luxury), "you deprive men both of action and of pleasure; and leaving nothing but indolence in their place, you even destroy the relish of indolence, which never is agreeable, but when it succeeds to labour" (Essays 270). The production of luxury items, therefore, is essential to human happiness. But this is not all. Luxury feeds the "natural appetites" and quashes the "unnatural ones" which usually grow as a result of a life of "ease and idleness" (Essays 270), a life which must follow where the "mechanical arts" or "arts of luxury" are not practised. Idleness, Hume thinks, is dangerous: "Almost all the moral, as well as natural evils of human

life arise from idleness" (D 238).²⁶ An idle life is filled with nothing but vicious excesses. Take, for example, the Tartars. Nothing but "beastly gluttony" and "drunkenness" and other such vices (Essays 271-72). In contrast "[t]he more men refine upon pleasure, the less they will indulge in excesses of any kind" (Essays 271). For Hume, then, luxury contributes both to human happiness and to virtue.²⁷

A second advantage of the "mechanical arts" is that "[t]he mind acquires new vigour; enlarges its powers and faculties" (Essays 270), and this in turn contributes to the progress of the "liberal" arts (e.g. poetry, philosophy etc). In fact neither of these two sorts of art can "be carried to perfection, without being accompanied, in some degree, with the other" (Essays 270). As a result of this progress in the manufacturing and liberal arts, "[p]rofound ignorance is totally banished, and men enjoy the privilege of rational creatures, to think as well as to act, to cultivate the pleasures of the mind as well as those of the body" (Essays 271). This is important. For as the minds of people improve, as their knowledge of arts and sciences increases, they become "more sociable" and are no longer "contented to remain in solitude" but "flock into cities" (Essays 271). (For Hume, "a perfect solitude is perhaps the greatest punishment we can suffer" (T 363). We shall discuss Hume's views on the sociability of man in Chapter 4). In cities, Hume thinks, people can satisfy their desire to "receive and communicate knowledge; to show their wit or their breeding; their taste in conversation or living, in clothes or furniture." As a result of this contact, manners improve, "and the tempers of men, as well as their behaviour, refine apace" (Essays 271).²⁸ In other words, progress in the "arts of luxury" leads, ultimately, to "an encrease of humanity" among the population. In societies with industry, commerce, and

luxury people are less ferocious, less barbaric, less mean, less ignorant and more knowledgeable, tender, and humane.

Thus industry, knowledge, and humanity, are linked together by an indissoluble chain, and are found, from experience as well as reason, to be peculiar to the more polished, and, what are commonly denominated, the more luxurious ages (Essays 271).²⁹

Hume is now faced with a problem. If luxury makes people more tender and humane, then aren't the "severe moralist" right in condemning luxury for making people less suited to war, and therefore less able to defend their nation? Hume's answer is, No. While people in luxurious societies lose their "ferocity", they do not lose their "martial spirit, or become less undaunted and vigorous in defence of their country or their liberty" (Essays 274). The "mechanical arts" make people stronger in mind and body and, thus, more able to defend their nation. Further, people of great "politeness and refinement" have a high "sense of honour" making them better fighters. This sense of honour is a result of their "knowledge and good education." This increased knowledge also leads to greater "martial skill", a better insight into "the art of war". Finally, inhabitants of a luxurious commercial society will be able to return to civilian life once they have left the battle field without losing any of their humanity: "[A]fter the field of battle, where honour and interest steel men against compassion as well as fear, the combatants divest themselves of the brute, and resume the man" (Essays 274).

In "Of Commerce" Hume brings out more good social consequences of the modern luxurious commercial state.

(i) Hume was aware of the nasty conditions in which the poor lived,

conditions of "want, penury, hard labour, dirty furniture, coarse or ragged clothes, nauseous meat and distasteful liquor" (E II 248). He was interested in improving their condition. Thus, responding to those who complained that, due to high labour costs, British products were uncompetitive, Hume replied that this disadvantage "is not to be put in competition with the happiness of so many millions [of workers]" (Essays 265). The improvement of the standard of living of the poor is another beneficial consequence of a luxurious commercial society. For only in such a society can there be an "equality" of property, in the sense that "[e]very person...enjoy[s] the fruits of his labour, in a full possession of all the necessaries, and many of the conveniences of life." Such an "equality", Hume thinks, is how things "ought to" be, for "such an equality is most suitable to human nature, and diminishes much less from the happiness of the rich than it adds to that of the poor" (Essays 265).

We should note here that, while Hume defends the "equality" of property in the sense that all ought to enjoy the fruits of their labour, he does not defend "perfect equality", that is, the equal distribution of goods among people (E II 194). Such equality, both history and common sense inform us, is both "impracticable" and "extremely pernicious to human society." (a) People differ in their "art, care, and industry" and, thus, "perfect equality" would soon be destroyed; (b) in order to ensure "perfect equality" government must institute both a "rigorous inquisition...to watch every inequality" and a "severe jurisdiction, to punish and redress [inequality]". But this is impracticable. It is also undesirable, for it would create a very despotic government; (c) "perfect equality", "destroying all subordination", would eliminate the nation's independent magistracy (E II 194).

Perfect equality of possession among people ought never to be attempted. But equality in the sense of the enjoyment of the products of one's labour and of the "necessaries" and "conveniences" of life is a policy that ought to be pursued in a state. And it can be pursued only in a modern commercial society, where, as we shall see in Chapter 5, the natural rules of justice are allowed to flourish unhindered.

(ii) In a luxurious commercial society there is (in a beneficial sense) equality of possession. Thus, in such a society there is a more fair distribution of wealth and the standard of living of all is greatly improved. This means that "any extraordinary taxes or impositions...[are] paid with more cheerfulness" given that no one rank in society is forced to shoulder the entire burden: "[W]hen the riches are dispersed among multitudes, the burthen feels light on every shoulder, and the taxes make not a very sensible difference on any one's way of living" (Essays 265).

(iii) "Time and experience", Hume declares, improve "the arts of agriculture" (Essays 256). They improve these arts to such a point that fewer and fewer people are needed on the land to produce the goods necessary to feed the nation. Thus, improvement in the arts of agriculture produces "superfluous hands" (Essays 256). The question now is, What is to be done with these "superfluous hands"? In a nation where the "arts of luxury" are practised, these "superfluous hands" would be directed into these arts, and thereby contribute to "the happiness of the state", since these arts "afford to many the opportunity of receiving enjoyments, with which they would otherwise have been unacquainted" (Essays 256). But where there are no "arts of

luxury" then there is always the fear that the sovereign will use the "superfluous hands" to contribute to "the greatness of the state" (Essays 257). That is, there is always the fear that the sovereign will use these hands "in fleets and armies, to encrease the dominions of the state abroad, and spread its fame over distant nations" (Essays 256). Where there are no industries to produce luxuries, then "the superfluities of the land, instead of maintaining tradesmen and manufacturers, may support fleets and armies to a much greater extent, than where a great many arts are required to minister to the luxury of particular persons" (Essays 256-57). Now, while Hume has no objection to people being "employed in the service of the public" (Essays 257; Essays 263),³⁰ he is greatly opposed to their being used by the state in order to fulfil a sovereign's colonial, military etc ambitions. Such a practice is "violent, and contrary to the more natural and usual course of things" (Essays 259). Any policy "which aggrandizes the public by the poverty of individuals" (Essays 260) is to be condemned. And such policies will be avoided in a state where the "arts of luxury" are practised. For, "the luxury of individuals must diminish the force, and check the ambition of the sovereign" (Essays 257). In other words, where there are "arts of luxury" the sovereign will have no "superfluous hands" to call upon in order to fight his ambitious wars for him, for such hands will be absorbed by the manufacturing and commercial sectors; and where there is luxury, the people will be happy, and happy people will not allow themselves to be used in their sovereign's violent wars and foreign adventures. Thus, luxury greatly diminishes the chances that people will suffer in the hands of an ambitious sovereign.

(iv) Where there are no arts for the production of luxuries, people

will be occupied solely with agriculture. The agricultural arts will improve so that in the end "there must arise a great superfluity from ...[people's] labour beyond what suffices to maintain them" (Essays 260-61). At this point, "[a] habit of indolence naturally prevails", for people will have no motivation to "encrease their skill and industry", and this is because there will be no luxury items, nothing "which may serve either to their pleasure or vanity", nothing in society for which they can exchange their "superfluity" (Essays 261). The results are disastrous. As mentioned "indolence" sets in. People begin to neglect the land. Skills begin to deteriorate, as does the desire to work, and thus the land which is cultivated "yields not its utmost." Suddenly, it might happen that "the public exigencies" call for the diversion of farm labourers into "the public service." But such people, being indolent and unskilled, are of little use to "the public". Further, as a result of this diversion, food production drops and land "cannot be brought into tillage for some years." Without food, the army "must either make sudden and violent conquests, or disband for want of subsistence". If the latter course is chosen, then the nation is vulnerable to foreign attack. And things are no better if the former course is taken, because, given the nation's deterioration in skills, its "soldiers must be ignorant and unskilful." In either case, then, "[a] regular attack or defence...is not to be expected" and ambitious neighbours will conquer the nation (Essays 261).

In contrast, in a society which "abounds in manufactures and mechanic arts", people will "study agriculture as a science, and redouble their industry and attention" (Essays 261). Given that in such a society there are luxury goods, agricultural superfluities can be "exchanged with manufactures for...commodities, which men's luxury now makes them

covet" (Essays 261). In such a society, then, there is no fear of indolence, loss of skill, and a drop in food production. Further, in such a society, "in the exigencies of state", people diverted to public service can perform their tasks with skill and vigour and, given the existence of "superfluities", they and the rest of the nation can be fed with success (Essays 262; Essays 272).

So far we have seen that, for Hume, luxury, industry, and commerce have beneficial social effects. However, Hume thinks that these elements have beneficial political effects too.³¹ We have already seen one way such effect: A modern luxurious commercial society provides the state with skilful and competent people who can be successfully diverted to public service. But providing competent people for service is not the only positive political consequence flowing from commerce and the "arts of luxury". There are more.

(i) As we have seen Hume thinks that the "arts of luxury" strengthen the mind and increase knowledge. One branch of knowledge which is increased is that of "the arts of government" (Essays 273). Such knowledge, Hume goes on to say, "naturally" makes sovereigns more mild and moderate, for it teaches them "the advantages of humane maxims above rigour and severity" (Essays 273). According to Hume, "[t]yrants ...produce rebels" (T 560). That is, subjects rebel because of the "rigour and severity" of their sovereigns. Such treatment "drive subjects into rebellion, and make the return to submission impracticable, by cutting off all hopes of pardon" (Essays 274). Thus, in a commercial society, sovereigns are less likely to drive their subjects to insurrection given their knowledge in the arts of government and their increased humanity. This combination of knowledge and humanity

in sovereigns is highly beneficial to government by making society less unruly: "Factions are...less inveterate, revolutions less tragical, authority less severe, and seditions less frequent. Even foreign wars abate of their cruelty" (Essays 274).

(ii) According to Hume manufacturing "is favourable to liberty, and has a natural tendency to preserve, if not produce a free government" (Essays 277). We have already come across the term "free government" and seen that under this heading Hume places both limited monarchies and republics. Here we should note Hume's definition of this form of government:

The government which, in common appellation, receives the appellation of free, is that which admits of a partition of power among several members, whose united authority is no less, or is commonly greater than that of any monarch; but who, in the usual course of administration, must act by general and equal laws, that are previously known to all the members and to all their subjects. In this sense, it must be owned, that liberty is the perfection of civil society (Essays 40-41).

In other words, a free government is a government which embodies both the principle of the division of powers and the rule of law, in contrast to the capricious rule of man. And "liberty is the perfection of civil society" in the sense that all members of society are restrained by law, including those in power. Thus, Hume has a clear preference for a government of laws, a system of government which gives

no opportunity to those in power to rule arbitrarily.³² Note that Hume does not say here that liberty (in the sense of the rule of law, or the absence of arbitrary coercion) in conjunction with the principle of the division of powers is the perfection of society. In other words, he does not say that free government is the perfection of society. Perfection, he says, lies only in the absence of arbitrary coercion (or liberty). However, in Chapter 6 we shall see that, according to Hume, the rule of law is best secured under free government, and that this is one reason why he thinks that free government is the best form of government. This will come out clearly in Chapter 6.

So, to return to the subject under discussion, Hume thinks that manufacturing "is favourable to liberty [i.e the absence of arbitrary coercion]" and gives rise to free government. Hume also thinks that of all forms of government, free governments are the only ones able to foster manufacturing and commerce (Essays 92), though this was not true of the ancient badly-contrived republics (Essays 419). Thus, Hume believes that economic causes have political effects and political causes have economic effects. But this is not all. As we shall see now, Hume also thinks that economic causes have social effects, as do political causes, and that social causes have both economic and political effects. In other words, for Hume, the economic, social, and political elements of society are intimately interrelated as causes and effects.³³ Now, where a society is "rude" and "unpolished" and has no manufacturing, no "arts of luxury", and, therefore, no commerce, people can occupy themselves only with agriculture, "and the whole society is divided into two classes, proprietors of land, and their vassals or tenants" (Essays 277). The relationship between these two classes is one of tyrant and slave. The peasants, due to their "poverty and mean-

ness of spirit", are "necessarily dependent, and fitted for slavery and subjection" (Essays 277). Further, given the poverty of the peasants, given that "poverty and hard labour debase the minds of the common people" (Essays 198), and given the lack of luxuries in a "rude" society and, therefore, the lack of a reason to work hard, it follows that "the beggarly peasant has no means, nor view, nor ambition of obtaining above a bare livelihood" (Essays 299). Meanwhile, as the peasants suffer in their misery, the landowners "naturally erect themselves into petty tyrants" and will either submit to a sovereign in order that they can better fulfil their "hopes of tyrannizing over others" or will, "like the ancient barons", choose to keep their independence, fighting among each other and thus "throw[ing] the whole society into such confusion [i.e the state of nature], as is perhaps worse than the most despotic government" (Essays 277).

However, in a society "where luxury nourishes commerce and industry" and, agriculture, as we have seen, is practised as a science, peasants are able to cultivate the land properly and "become rich and independent" (Essays 277). Their minds improve and the existence of luxury in society means that peasants are motivated to increase their labour. At the same time a new rank of men arises in society, "tradesmen and merchants" or "the middling rank" (Essays 277). These people are not prepared to submit to the tyranny of higher ranks (including the sovereign). Nor do they have any desire to suppress the lower ranks (Essays 277). What they desire is "equal laws" in order to "secure their property, and preserve them from monarchical, as well as aristocratical tyranny" (Essays 278). In other words, the middle rank demands the rule of law. For without the security which comes with the rule of law and the absence of arbitrary coercion people will have no

incentive to acquire private property, increase wealth, engage in commerce and industry etc. Further, without the rule of law society suffers in the area of knowledge. For "[f]rom law arises security: From security curiosity: And from curiosity knowledge" (Essays 118). Thus, where rulers exercise arbitrary power "no improvement can ever be expected in the sciences, in the liberal arts, in laws, and scarcely in the manual arts and manufactures" (Essays 124). Clearly, such a situation is unacceptable to the "middling rank", for its prosperity depends greatly upon the advancement of art and science. For these reasons, then, this rank of men works hard to establish a government of laws, or even a free government (i.e the rule of law and the division of powers) knowing that "law...[is] the source of all security and happiness" (Essays 124). In short, "[the] middling rank of men...are the best and firmest basis of public liberty" (Essays 277).³⁴

In addition to this, the middle rank challenges the superior status of "the ancient nobility" by "becoming [their] rivals in wealth" (Essays 264). Hume was not impressed by the nobility. Nobles are "too much immers'd in Pleasure...to hearken the Voice of Reason" (Essays 546). They are full of "haughty indolence" and spend all day "dream-[ing] of nothing but pedigrees and genealogies" (E II 249). They have "false ideas of rank and superiority" (Essays 448), and have no capacity for morality (Essays 548). The middle rank, however, is different. Members of this rank have "Wisdom and Ability, as well as ...Virtue" and they have "a better Chance for attaining a Knowledge both of Men and Things, than those of a more elevated Station" (Essays 547; Essays 551).³⁵

The rise of luxury (and therefore of industry and commerce) in a state cause the rise of the middle rank, which in turn causes the rise

of a government of laws or even a free government. Such a government strengthens commerce, luxury, and industry, which in turn strengthen the foundations of the middle rank, which in turn fuels commerce, luxury, and industry. And so on. As I said, for Hume, economic, social, and political elements are inextricably intertwined as causes and effects. And the "arts of luxury" contribute to an important political effect, namely, the rise of a salutary and beneficial (for both subjects and rulers) type of governance, governance by means of law, and even to the rise of a salutary and beneficial form of government, free government.

I want to end this part of our discussion by noting one last beneficial social consequence of the "arts of luxury". As the above discussion makes clear, in a society where the "arts of luxury" flourish the economic power of the common people increases. Further, in such a society a rich middle rank develops. In other words, in a luxurious modern commercial society "[a] too great disproportion [of wealth] among the citizens" is avoided, and there are no great extremes of wealth and poverty. There will be no very rich and no very poor, and, therefore, no very rich to oppress the very poor. As a result, in such a society, people will not be discouraged to work, increase wealth, improve technology etc: "[W]here the riches are in few hands, these must enjoy all the power, and will readily conspire to lay the whole burthen on the poor, and oppress then still farther, to the discouragement of all industry" (Essays 265). Hume thinks that inequality of wealth is inevitable in a modern society (Essays 297-98). But, clearly, he also thinks that this inequality ought not to be great.³⁶

V

It is clear that, for Hume, luxury is beneficial. A luxurious commercial society is the best form of society. But the luxury that Hume defends is "innocent luxury" (Essays 278) in contrast to "vicious" or "excessive" luxury (Essays 279). The latter is to be avoided, for it "is the source of many ills" (Essays 280). For example, Hume thinks that "[a] rich man lies under a moral obligation to communicate to those in necessity a share of his superfluities" (T 482). But where a rich man wallows in excessive luxury, then he has "no ability for such acts of duty and generosity as are required by his situation and fortune" (Essays 279). However, Hume goes on to say that where innocent luxury cannot be practised, and the only choice is between excessive luxury and no luxury at all, then the former should be preferred. For where there is no luxury at all, there is only "sloth and idleness" and these "are more hurtful both to private persons and to the public" than excessive luxury (Essays 280):

When sloth reigns, a mean uncultivated way of life prevails amongst individuals, without society, without enjoyment. And if the sovereign, in such a situation, demands the service of his subjects, the labour of the state suffices only to furnish the necessaries of life to the labourers, and can afford nothing to those who are employed in the public service (Essays 280).

Thus, luxury is beneficial, even when it is excessive. Luxury fuels commerce and also grows as a result of commerce. It is both the cause and effect of commerce. It causes agriculture and industry to

flourish. It creates happy and prosperous societies. It creates virtuous people. It spreads humanity and refinement and brings people together into cities, freeing them from their "greatest punishment", solitude. It creates better soldiers. It gives rise to the middle rank. And, finally, it creates better sovereigns and better governments, free governments. Thus, the prevailing belief that luxury is pernicious is wrong: "Luxury, or a refinement on the pleasures and conveniences of life...tend[s] to the increase of industry, civility, and arts [and] regulate[s] anew our moral as well as political sentiments...[It is] laudable or innocent...[not] pernicious and blameable" (E II 181).

VI

"Commerce nourishes luxury." Thus, where commerce is strong in a state and the "arts of luxury" flourish, that state will enjoy to the fullest the economic, social, and political benefits described above. But where commerce is hindered such enjoyment will also be hindered. Now, Britain is a commercial nation (Essays 92; Essays 282; Essays 576) and, writing in 1752, Hume tells us that in the "last sixty years...[t]rade and manufactures, and agriculture, have encreased" in Britain (Essays 508). However, as we have seen, Hume complains that, of all the European nations, Britain has the severest trade barriers. Thus, Britain is unable to reap the full benefits of strong commerce and manufacturing. What benefits would Britain enjoy if unnecessary tariffs were removed (as Hume recommends they ought to be) and commerce, manufacturing, and luxury were allowed to fully flourish?

(A) We already know that, for Hume, economic causes have political

effects and that strong commerce and manufacturing give rise to free government. Now, being a commercial and manufacturing nation, Britain already has a free government, a limited monarchy. But, as we saw, Hume takes it to be defective (even in its most perfect form). Hume's call for unhindered commerce and strong manufacturing will, it seems, have the effect of transforming Britain into the most perfect form of free government, a well-contrived republic.³⁷ And this transformation, according to Hume's own principles, will not be a radical one, for he labels both limited monarchies and well-contrived republics free governments. Therefore, both share many political and constitutional fundamentals. Thus, Britain's transformation into a well-contrived republic will not disrupt that nation's pillars. We shall return to this point in Chapter 6 and discuss it in greater detail.

(B) With this change in form of government Britain will acquire as its independent magistracy the virtuous and able middle rank. And, like the above reform, this reform too will not be a radical one, but conservative/radical. For, as we already know, Hume thinks that in Britain, those in authority are the "gentry and merchants" (Essays 207) (though only the former ought to be since Britain has a monarchical form of government). Thus, the ascendancy of the British middle rank as the nation's independent magistracy will not require any violent transformation given that this rank is already in a position of authority.

(C) No doubt, flourishing commerce and manufacturing will improve the condition of Britain's poor, elevating most of them into the middle rank.

These are just some of the more important social and political changes that would be introduced into Britain if commerce (and therefore, manufacturing and luxury) were allowed to flourish unhindered in

that country. To repeat a point made earlier, Hume's call for strong commerce, industry, and luxury is a call for progressive reform.

VII

Two important things have been established in this chapter. First, there can be no doubt that Hume's writings contain reformist recommendations. Given this, and given that Hume is writing for the public, we can go back to the arguments in Chapter 1 which depended on establishing this point and embrace them with certainty: Hume is a reformer. Second, it is clear that Hume puts forward conservative/radical reforms. Hume is a reformer who, while never advocating the complete extirpation of what exists, is eager to overturn prevailing beliefs, practices, and institutions (where necessary) and is not reluctant to recommend reforms which deviate significantly from the public's past experience. He has no blind reverence for the established and is prepared to tamper in important ways with fundamental elements of the British state: The constitution, political parties, the system of ranking etc. And since Hume wants his works to be read by the public and has an "ambition...of contributing to the instruction of the public" (T 271), an ambition he repeats even on his death-bed, we can say that he aims his progressive recommendations at the world outside his study. This, we should note, is true even of "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". Hume wrote this work for the public. There can be no doubt about this. First, this essay appears in the Essays and, as we saw, the "Advertisement" of this volume makes it clear that its contents had the public as its target. Second, in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" Hume tells us of his intention to conduct

his inquiry into the best form of government "in as few words as possible." Why? Because a long work on this subject "would not, I apprehend, be very acceptable to the public, who will be apt to regard such disquisitions both as useless and chimerical" (Essays 514). In other words, Hume squares this work to the likes and dislike of the public, clearly indicating that he wants it to be read by the public. And, given his desire to instruct the public, it is clear that he wants "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" (and, in fact, all his works), not only to be read by the public, but to influence the public. Third, in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth", Hume defends the practicability of the form of government he has constructed: "That the foregoing plan of government is practicable, no one can doubt, who considers the resemblance it bears to the commonwealth of the United Provinces, a wise and renowned [republican] government" (Essays 526). But why would Hume seek to defend the feasibility of his Perfect Commonwealth unless he was interested in seeing it established, that is, unless here was interested in making a practical impact upon the public with "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth".

All this, I think, must sow seeds of doubt in our minds regarding the advise of those who tell us that, for Hume, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" was just an amusement or a speculative exercise. But before we can take this essay seriously, more work needs to be done. First, we must respond to those who argue that Hume was restricted to conservative reformism. We must show that they are wrong and that there is room in Hume's thought for conservative/radical reformism. If we cannot show this, then the arguments of Chapters 1 and 2 collapse, and we will have no hope defending our position regarding "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". Second, we have to show that "Idea of a Perfect

Commonwealth" itself is a conservative/radical reform. For if it is true (as some have argued) that this essay is a radical reform, while all we can show is that Hume is a conservative/radical reformer, (that is, if we cannot show that there is agreement and harmony between the nature of the reformism that Hume embraces, and the nature of the reforms advocated in "Idea of a perfect Commonwealth"), then we must conclude that Hume did not write "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" with serious intent. The next three chapters will be devoted to the first task.

CHAPTER 3

As mentioned in the "Introduction", Hume is taken to be a conservative reformer because certain important elements in his philosophy are seen as dictating conservative reformism. One such element that is commonly pointed to is the limitation Hume places on reason and the resultant central role that custom plays in his thought, a role summarised by Hume in his claim that "[c]ustom, then, is the great guide of human life" (E I 44). As we saw in the "Introduction", scholars understand Hume as telling us here that, normatively, custom ought to be our guide of life and that any significant deviation from the past ought to be avoided. Now, if this is Hume's view, then both the conservative/radical reforms examined in the previous chapter and "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" itself could not have been put forward seriously by Hume. For these reforms do in fact deviate significantly from the past. In this chapter we shall see that the view usually ascribed to Hume regarding the normative question of our guide of life is mistaken. While it is true that, for Hume, custom does in fact guide human life, Hume does not tell us that this ought to be the case. Hume never tells us that we ought to move into the future and make improvements with an eye on past experience alone. Rather, his view is that humans ought to be guided by experience and reflection, that is, by the experimental method of reasoning. We saw in the "Introduction" that Hume is portrayed as limiting our choice of guides to either past experience or rationalist reason. Here we shall see that it is not the case that he imposes such a limitation. There is a third alternative, experimental reasoning. And this method of reasoning, we shall see, does not confine Hume to conservative reformism.¹

I

According to Hume, "all human affairs, are entirely governed by opinion" (Essays 51), and our most important opinions (or beliefs) are those about absent or unobserved matters of fact, that is, beliefs about what exists which are not founded upon the "present testimony of the senses, or the records of our memory" (E I 26). These beliefs are the most important because it is on them that "the whole conduct of life depends" (E I 108). Without such beliefs we would be restricted to beliefs based on present perception and memory, and, thus, we would "never know how to adjust means to ends, or to employ our natural powers in the production of any effect. There would be an end at once of all action, as well as the chief part of speculation" (E I 45). For our purpose in this chapter it is important that we investigate how, according to Hume, our matter-of-fact beliefs about the unobserved are formed. This investigation will be brief, and many philosophical and interpretive questions and difficulties surrounding Hume's discussion of belief-formation (and related issues) will be ignored. This is not the place to deal with them. They are not important for our purpose. What is important for us is that we understand how Hume thinks that our beliefs about absent matters of fact are formed so that we can in turn understand what he means when he calls custom the guide of life.

Hume labels the contents of the mind "perceptions" (T 1; E I 17) and then goes on to divide these into "impressions" and "ideas". The former are "all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul" (T 1). They enter the mind "when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will" (E I 18).

Impressions, then, arise as a result of our experiences. Ideas, on the other hand, arise from these very impressions. They are copies of impressions and are used in thinking, remembering, reasoning etc (T 1; E I 18). Thus, there can be no mental activity without experience. But while ideas are copies of impressions, they differ from these in that they are "less forcible and lively" than impressions (E I 18). They are "faint" copies of those perceptions from which they arise (T 1).

Now, Hume recognises two sorts of idea depending on the mental faculty to which they belong, the memory or the imagination (T 8. He also distinguishes between two types of impression, but this is not important at this point). There are two differences between these two types of idea. First, ideas of memory are more forceful than those of the imagination (T 9). Second, ideas of memory exist in the order in which they entered the mind by means of their corresponding impressions. The memory does not manipulate its ideas, but simply recalls them in the order in which they were caused by impressions. Ideas of imagination, however, are different, for the imagination does rearrange its ideas as it sees fit: "[T]he imagination is not restrain'd to the same order and form with the original impressions." It has the "power of variation" (T 9), that is, "the liberty...to transpose and change its ideas" (T 10). It can combine its simple perceptions (those perceptions which "admit of no distinction nor separation" (T 2)), and separate its complex ones (those which "may be distinguished into parts" (T 2)). "[A]ll simple ideas may be separated by the imagination, and may be united again in what form it pleases" (T 10). In this way, the mind is able to acquire (complex) perceptions it has never directly experienced (though always from (simple) perceptions it has previously experienced) (T 3; E I 19). Ultimately, then, all contents

of the mind are derived from experience.

The fact that Hume attributes to the imagination the "power of variation" suggests that, for him, the imagination is the faculty by means of which we fantasise, day-dream etc. And this is correct, but only partly. The imagination as "fancy" (T 10) is certainly responsible for our fantasising etc. But, this is not the only sense in which Hume uses the term "imagination". He also uses it to mean that faculty by means of which we think and reason (T 267). Hume calls the imagination in this sense "the understanding", and tells us that it is the owner of "the general and more establish'd properties of the imagination" (T 267). He also tells us that "[t]he understanding exerts itself after two different ways, as it judges from demonstration or probability" (T 413). Elsewhere, he attributes our "demonstrative and probable reasonings" to the faculty of "reason" (T 117-18 fn. 1). Thus, it seems, that Hume uses the terms "understanding" and "reason" interchangeably. In this sense, that is, in the sense of reason or understanding, the imagination is not at liberty to arrange its ideas as it pleases. In this sense the imagination is directed by the principles of association: Resemblance, contiguity in time and place, and cause and effect (T 11; T Abstract 662; E I 24). These principles are responsible for "all the operations of the mind" and are "really to us the cement of the universe" (T Abstract 662). They unite or connect our ideas (E I 24), and are responsible for the mind's being "convey'd from one idea to another" (T 11; E I 23). They form "a kind of ATTRACTION" between our ideas, and cause the mind to "conjoin" them so that they occur in the mind with regularity and method (T 12-13). In general all three associative relations operate in the same way, by "produc[ing] an association among our ideas, and upon the appearance of

one idea naturally introduce another" (T 11). However, each principle achieves this task differently (E I 24).

Now, Hume tells us that the understanding or reason has two objects, namely "Relations of Ideas" and "Matters of Fact" (E I 25). Under the former heading Hume places those beliefs which are "either intuitively or demonstratively certain", that is, propositions of arithmetic, geometry and algebra (E I 25; T 69-73). Such propositions "are discoverable by the mere operation of thought" without any reference to what is "existent in the universe" (E I 25). Their truth can be discovered without any empirical investigation, by remaining solely within the realm of ideas, and "compar[ing] together" the ideas in the mind (T 69). Thus, such beliefs are a priori. Further, the opposites of such beliefs are inconceivable. They cannot be denied without contradiction (E I 25).

However, propositions of matter of fact are different. First, they are empirical statements or statements about "real existence" (E I 26), and so cannot be discovered without empirical investigation (E I 24). Due to this (and here is the second difference) , "[t]he contrary of every matter of fact is still possible; because it can never imply a contradiction" (E I 25). To use Hume's example, the matter-of-fact belief that the sun will not rise tomorrow is as intelligible as the contrary belief that it will rise tomorrow (E I 26). For this belief (like all beliefs about matters of fact) is not established by means of the comparison of ideas, that is, by either intuitive or demonstrative reasoning. Since beliefs about "real existence" do not depend upon relations of ideas, there is nothing self-contradictory about their opposites. Both are "conceived by the mind with the same facility and distinctness, as if ever so conformable to reality" (E I 25).

This quality of beliefs about matters of fact arouses Hume's curiosity and leads him to ask about "the nature of that evidence which assures us of any real existence or matter of fact, beyond the present testimony of our senses, or the records of our memory" (E I 26). We shall return to this question in a moment. But first an important point has to be made.

We have seen that, for Hume, propositions about relations of ideas cannot be denied without contradiction, unlike propositions about matters of fact. This suggests that, for Hume, certainty exists only in the realm of relations of ideas. Beliefs about matters of fact have no certainty. And this is what Hume tells us at one point: Only relations "depending solely upon ideas, can be the objects of knowledge and certainty" (T 70). Like Locke before him, Hume reserves the term "knowledge" for propositions which are necessary: "By knowledge, I mean the assurance arising from the comparison of ideas" (T 124). Other propositions, that is, matter-of-fact propositions about what exists, are a matter, not of knowledge and certainty, but of "probability" (T 73-78). Later, however, Hume becomes dissatisfied with this division of reason, for he realises that there are some matter-of-fact beliefs e.g. the sun will rise tomorrow, which "exceed probability", that is, which are certain (T 124). Thus, while retaining his earlier strict definition of knowledge, Hume divides beliefs about matters of fact into two kinds, namely, "proofs" and "probabilities" (T 124). The former, like all matter-of-fact beliefs, are derived from experience, but are "entirely free from doubt and uncertainty." The latter, however, "are still attended with uncertainty" (T 124). Hume makes this very same point in the first Enquiry. He criticises Locke for holding that all propositions which are not demonstrative are merely

probable and uncertain. For, if Locke is correct, then "we must say, that it is only probable all men will die, or that the sun will rise to-morrow." But this is absurd. Thus, "we ought to divide arguments into demonstrations [i.e knowledge], proofs, and probabilities", proofs being "arguments from experience as leave no room for doubt and opposition", and probabilities being, again arguments from experience, but which do leave room for doubt (E I 56 fn. 1). For Hume, then, it is not the case that we can cast doubt on all matter-of-fact beliefs. Some beliefs of this kind, proofs, are "entirely certain", even though they are not, strictly speaking, knowledge. We shall return to this point later.

Let us now return to the question raised a moment ago. What is "the nature of the evidence which assures us of any real existence or matter of fact"? No such question about "evidence" arises in the case of beliefs established by means of intuition or demonstration, for such beliefs cannot be conceived of as false. Nor does this question arise in the case of matter-of-fact beliefs which are the result of either present sense-perception or memory. I have the belief that the sun is now rising because I now see it rising. And I have the belief that the sun rose yesterday because I saw it doing so and retain the memory. But what about matter-of-fact beliefs which are not founded on present perception or memory? Why do we believe with certainty that the sun will rise tomorrow? Since this is a matter-of-fact belief it is not susceptible of either demonstration or intuition and, thus, it is as conceivable as its opposite. There is nothing unintelligible about the contrary of any belief about "real existence" (E I 25). But if this is so, then why do we believe that the sun will rise tomorrow rather than its equally intelligible opposite? What is it that "assures" us of our

beliefs about absent or unobserved matters of fact?

Hume begins his answer by telling us that our assurance of such beliefs has to do with the associative principle of cause and effect: "[A]ll reasonings concerning matters of fact are founded on the relation of cause and effect" (T Abstract 649). Only this principle of the imagination can take us "beyond the evidence of our memory and senses" (E I 26; T 74). How? In the past we have experienced a "constant conjunction" of two objects e.g flame and heat, and we remember this constant conjunction. "Without any farther ceremony, we call the one cause and the other effect, and infer the existence of the one from that of the other" (T 87). Now, in cases where we "learn" that two objects are constantly conjoined as cause and effect, both objects must be present to the senses, and this repeated experience of conjoined objects is remembered. "But in all cases, wherein we reason concerning them, there is only one perceiv'd or remember'd, and the other is supply'd in conformity to our past experience" (T 87). Thus, on the basis of memory and repeated past experience (or custom)² the mind moves (i.e makes an inference) from the idea of an experienced cause (or effect) to the idea of an unobserved effect (or cause). And it can make this move only by means of the associative principle of cause and effect. It is by means of this principle alone that we can make inferences from the observed to the unobserved and thus go beyond the data of immediate perception and memory. But note the central role that Hume attributes to custom in this process.

Custom also plays a key part in Hume's account of how we acquire knowledge of causes and effects. Such knowledge is not gained by means of demonstration or intuition, for reason in this sense "can never satisfy us that the existence of any one object does ever imply that of

another" (T 97; T 88-89; E I 27). Rather, it is only by means of past experience that we discover "that any particular objects are constantly conjoined with each other" (E I 27). Thus, "causes and effects are discoverable, not by reason but by experience" (E I 28).

So far, then we have the following: In the past we have experienced the constant conjunction of A's and B's. We label one cause and the other effect and remember this. Thus, when sometime in the future we acquire an impression or idea of A we expect B to follow. We make an inference from the observed to unobserved on the basis of repeated past experience (or custom). Now, Hume goes on to say that in making such an inference, past experience is "extended to future times, and to other objects" (E I 33). As Hume puts it in his Abstract: "[A]ll reasonings from experience are founded on the supposition, that the course of nature will remain uniformly the same" (T Abstract 651; E I 35). His next question is why we extend past experience into the future. What is the foundation of the "supposition" that nature is constant and that, therefore, the future resembles the past? This supposition is neither a relation of idea nor a matter of fact. Thus, it is the result neither of intuitive or demonstrative reasoning nor of probable reasoning (E I 35-36; T 89-90). Rather, it is founded on "some other principle of equal weight and authority...What that principle is may well be worth the pains of enquiry" (E I 41-42). Hume's enquiry leads to the conclusion that "[t]his principle is Custom or Habit" (E I 43).

The supposition, that the future resembles the past, is not founded on arguments of any kind, but is deriv'd entirely from from habit, by which we are determin'd to expect for the future the same train of

objects, to which we have been accustom'd (T 134).

To understand this point we must note that, for Hume, people are by nature habit forming creatures, and habits are acquired as a result of repeated experience (T 198). Now, once a habit is acquired it is clung to and extended into the future, for "repetition of any particular act or operation produces a propensity to renew the same act or operation" (E I 43). We shall return to this quality that Hume attributes to the human mind in the next chapter when discussing his conservative conception of man. What is important for us now is that, for Hume, it is the propensity of the mind to reproduce its operations as a result of repeated past experience, that is, custom, which explains why a causal relation experienced in the past is extended into the future. And, as we saw a moment ago, custom also explains why in the mind the ideas of A and B are associated as causes and effects, and why, when I see or have an impression of A, I acquire the thought or idea of B and expect it to follow. Thus, in a number of important ways, our inferences from the observed to the unobserved are founded on habit.

But Hume does not want to know merely how we come to have the idea or thought of an unobserved object. He wants to know why we have the belief that this unobserved object will follow the observed one. To answer this question Hume investigates the difference between having a mere idea and having a belief (E I 47).

Beliefs, for Hume, are ideas, but they differ from other ideas (thoughts, fictions etc) in that they are more vivid or forceful. A belief is "A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION" (T 96). A belief is "a peculiar feeling or sentiment" which attends the way in which we apprehend certain ideas (T 623; E I

48). "[B]elief is nothing but a more vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady conception [i.e idea] of an object" (E I 49). But how does an idea which is felt as a belief acquire its force or liveliness? Hume's answer is: As a result of a present impression and custom: "All belief of matter of fact or real existence is derived merely from some object, present to the memory or senses, and a customary conjunction between that and some other object" (E I 46). In other words, in the past we have experienced the constant conjunction of A's and B's. As a result of this repeated experience a mental habit is established and remembered. Thus, when an impression of A enters the mind the idea of B follows, and this idea becomes a belief by acquiring force from its associated impression A. This impression communicates some of its force to the idea, thus transforming it into a belief by giving it a feeling different to a mere idea (T 96; E I 49-50).

Thus, while a number of the Humean mind's propensities and principles unite in giving us our beliefs about unobserved matters of fact, at bottom there lies custom. Without the propensity to acquire habits and extend these into the future we would be unable to formulate beliefs about the absent past, present, and future, and without such beliefs life would be impossible. It is for this reason that Hume tells us that custom is "necessary to the subsistence of our species" (E I 55), and that "[c]ustom...is the great guide of human life" (E I 44). For he is convinced that without custom we would be unable to go beyond our present perceptions and memories, thus bringing life to a halt.

[C]ustom, or if you will...the relation of cause and effect...peoples the world, and brings us acquainted with such existences, as by their removal in time and place, lie beyond the reach of the senses and memory.

By means of it I paint the universe in my imagination, and fix my attention on any part of it I please...[E]very thing...which I believe...[is] nothing but ideas; tho' by their force and settled order, arising from custom and the relation of cause and effect, they distinguish themselves from the other ideas, which are merely the offspring of the imagination [i.e fancy] (T 108).

Thus "[t]is not, therefore, reason, which is the guide of life, but custom" (T Abstract 652).

From what we have said so far it might appear that Hume denies that reason plays any part in the realm of matters of fact. Isn't this exactly what Hume is saying in the short quote immediately above? No. Hume makes it very clear that in formulating our matter-of-fact beliefs we do reason.³ We have already noted that Hume describes the movement from an observed cause (or effect) to an unobserved effect (or cause) as an "inference". This inference is a type of reasoning: "We infer a cause immediately from its effect; and this inference is not only a true species of reasoning, but the strongest of all others" (T 97 fn. 1). And by Book I, Part III, Section XIV of the Treatise Hume thinks that he has "explain'd the manner, in which we reason beyond our immediate impressions, and conclude that such particular causes must have such particular effects" (T 155). Thus, we do reason about matters of fact, but the reasoning here is not intuition or demonstration. Rather it is probable reasoning (or "moral reasoning" as he also calls it (E I 35). And at the heart of such reasoning, as we have seen, lies custom: "According to my system, all [probable] reasonings are nothing but the effects of custom; and custom has no influence, but

by invivening the imagination, and giving us a strong conception of any object" (T 149). This "strong conception" is a belief or lively idea and is the result of probable reasoning.

Our matter-of-fact beliefs do spring from a form of reasoning. Thus, when Hume tells us that custom, and not reason, is the guide of life he is telling us in short-hand that our beliefs are the result of probable reasoning, in contrast to intuitive or demonstrative reasoning. He is not telling us that reasoning plays no part at all in their formation.

II

We can now understand why Hume thinks that custom is "the great guide of human life." For, according to him, custom lies at the heart of that type of reasoning we use in order to formulate our most important beliefs. When we reason about matters of fact we depend upon repeated past experience. This is how nature has determined we should operate. And this, Hume thinks, is fortunate for us, for intuition and demonstration are of no use in the realm of "real existence". They are "uncertain" (E I 106). When reasoning about what exists people are, in fact, guided by custom (fortunately).

I underline the words "in fact" in the above sentence in order to emphasis a point that should, by now, be clear: That by telling us that custom is the guide of life Hume is not speaking normatively but descriptively.⁴ Having examined as an anatomist how humans in fact formulate beliefs about unobserved matters of fact, Hume states as his scientific, descriptive, conclusion that humans are guided by custom. But does he say that always and everywhere custom on its own ought to be humanity's guide? No, for "custom...may be fallacious and deceit-

ful" (E I 159). "Custom may lead us into some false comparison of ideas" (T 116). Thus, on its own custom can lead to mistakes when reasoning about "real existence".

Though experience be our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact; it must be acknowledged, that this guide is not altogether infallible, but in some cases is apt to lead us into errors (E I 110).

Hume declares that "[a] wise man...proportions his belief to the evidence" (E I 110), and that the wise person collects his evidence by means of "diligent observation" (E I 110), that is, by reflecting upon experience. As a result of such reflection a wise man will sometimes find that his experience of an event is "infallible" in the sense that it is not countered by opposite experiences. In such a case "he expects the event with the last degree of assurance, and regards his past experience as a full proof of the future existence of that event" (E I 110). At other times, however, the wise man will find that his experience of an event varies. Then, "he proceeds with more caution: He weighs the opposite experiments...and when at last he fixes his judgement, the evidence exceeds not what we properly call probability" (E I 111). Thus, both proofs and probabilities are established as a result of experience and reflection, and while we can use the former as a guide of life, we ought to do so only after we have engaged in careful reflection or "diligent observation". For the natural human propensity to collect and be guided by past experience is "fallacious and deceitful".

Hume the anatomist discovers that we have a natural propensity to acquire and be guided by custom. But he also discovers that this natural propensity, like all others, can lead us astray "if not cor-

rected by experience and reflection" (NHR 33-34; my emphasis). For Hume, then, our guide of life must not be custom on its own, but the experimental method of reasoning.

We have already discussed the experimental method of reasoning, and there is no need to repeat this discussion here. But it is important that we return to one point made during that discussion, namely, that, for Hume, "we can expect assurance and conviction" from the experimental method of reasoning (T 273). Does this mean that this method of reasoning gives us knowledge? No. Experimental reasoning is matter-of-fact reasoning, or probable reasoning, corrected by reflection. But probable reasoning, even when corrected, can never give knowledge. As we saw, knowledge in Hume's strict sense can only spring from intuition or demonstration. Does this mean that the conclusions of experimental reasoning are always uncertain? Again, no. For, we must recall that, according to Hume, probable reasoning provides us with either "proofs" or "probabilities", and proofs (such as "the sun will rise tomorrow" or "all men must die") are certain. As we noted earlier, they "leave no room for doubt" and are "entirely free from doubt and uncertainty." Probabilities, however, are "attended with uncertainty", though Hume is convinced that some probabilities e.g. when we have "a hundred uniform experiments, with only one that is contradictory", approach proofs in their certainty and "reasonably beget a pretty strong degree of assurance" (E I 111; my emphasis). Thus, the experimental method of reasoning, being a type of probable reasoning, cannot give us "knowledge", in Hume's strict sense, but it can give us certainty (in the case of proofs), and even in the case of probabilities it can sometimes produce beliefs which come close to certainty. And this, Hume thinks, is all we need to get on with the business of life.

Before moving on it is important that we deal with a problem caused by what has been said in this section. Earlier in this thesis I emphasised that, as a mitigated sceptic, Hume uses nature as his guide. But now it appears that I have contradicted this claim. For I have said that, while Hume thinks that nature has provided us with past experience alone as our guide of life, he ignores this guide and instead turns to experimental reasoning. Thus, it seems that in recommending experimental reasoning Hume is turning his back on nature. But this is not so. For one thing, while this method does not follow past experience blindly, it does, as we have seen, make important use of it. Further, this method of reasoning itself is natural to us. We saw in Chapter 1 that the aim of experimental reasoning is "to render all our principles as universal as possible" (T Intro xiv). Now, Hume thinks "that from our earliest Infancy we make continual Advances in forming more general Principles of Conduct and Reasoning; that the larger Experience we acquire, and the stronger Reason we are endow'd with, we always render our Principles the more general and comprehensive; and what we call Philosophy is nothing but a more regular and methodical Operation of the same kind" (D 151; first two emphases mine). Thus, experimental reasoning is natural to humans.

But this now gives rise to a new problem. If nature has given us as guides both past experience alone and past experience corrected by reflection (i.e experimental reasoning), how are we justified in choosing the latter as our guide above the former? According to Hume "concerning the choice of our guide...[we] ought to prefer that which is safest and most agreeable" (T 271). Thus, we are warranted in choosing as our guide of life experimental reasoning over past experience alone because the former is more salutary and beneficial than the

latter. With experimental reasoning "we may only expect greater Stability, if not greater Truth, from our Philosophy, on account of its exacter and more scrupulous Method of proceeding" (D 151).

III

I have spent so much time on Hume's discussion of how matter-of-fact beliefs are formulated and how they ought to be formulated because this discussion is of great importance to us. For reasoning about matters of fact plays a central role in Hume's account of how our beliefs about moral and political values are formulated.

We noted above that Hume places beliefs about arithmetic, algebra etc under the heading of "relations of ideas" while beliefs about "real existence" are placed under the heading of "matters of fact". But what about beliefs regarding moral and political values? Where do these belong in Hume's division? Nowhere. For Hume thinks that opinions about such values spring neither from intuitive nor demonstrative nor probable reasoning. They are neither relations of ideas nor matters of fact (T 463-69). Rather, they are derived from "some impression or sentiment" and are "more properly felt than judg'd of" (T 470). Briefly, and without dealing with the many problems and questions surrounding this issue (for they are not important for us), the feelings or impressions from which values are derived are feelings of approval (or approbation) and disapproval (or disapprobation) (T 471)⁵ and are "nothing but particular pains or pleasures" (T 471). The approval or disapproval we feel when contemplating a quality or action⁶ and label it virtuous or vicious, is pleasing or painful respectively. And here we should note that, for Hume, "[w]e do not infer a character

to be virtuous, because it pleases: But in feeling that it pleases after such a particular manner, we in effect feel that it is virtuous" (T 471). Hume adds that these feelings are of a "peculiar kind" (T 472) in that they are disinterested or impartial: "'Tis only when a character is considered in general, without reference to our particular interest, that it causes such a feeling or sentiment, as denominates it morally good or evil" (T 472). Moral approval and disapproval arise from "the general survey or view of any action or quality of the mind" (T 614). As Hume puts it in the second Enquiry, virtue is "whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation; and vice the contrary" (E II 289).

Finally, Hume thinks that these feelings of approval and disapproval are universal. They belong to all. Thus, our opinions of value in the area of morals and politics spring from "some sentiment common to all mankind, which recommends the same object to general approbation" (E II 272). But what "object" is approved of or disapproved of? What, according to Hume, does this sentiment approve of or disapprove of in a character or action in order to decide its moral status? "It appears, that there never was any quality recommended by any one, as a virtue or moral excellence, but on account of its being useful, or agreeable to a man himself or to others" (E II 336; T 591). Thus, our beliefs about value are the result of impartial and universal feelings of approval or disapproval that we experience when we find something useful or agreeable to ourselves or others. This is how all people in fact formulate moral and political judgements (and it is clear that Hume believes that this is how they ought to).

Given that Hume thinks that our opinions about value spring from "sentiments common to all mankind" it might appear that, for him, all

people will arrive at the same beliefs about what is morally and politically valuable. But this is not so: "The principles upon which men reason in morals are always the same; though the conclusions which they draw are often very different" (E II 335-36). Hume does not want to deny that people arrive at different conclusions about moral and political values, but "all differences...in morals may be reduced to...one general foundation" (E II 336), namely, approval or disapproval of what is useful or agreeable.

So, Hume thinks that our opinions about value in the area of morality and politics do not spring from any sort of reasoning. However, he does think that one type of reasoning, namely, reasoning about matters of fact, or probable reasoning, does play a central role in our formulation of such values.⁷ For, as the above discussion makes clear, utility or usefulness features in our formulation of moral and political judgements. In fact Hume thinks that the important artificial virtues (justice, allegiance etc) are virtues because our experience of their usefulness gives us a feeling of approval. The beneficial consequences or usefulness of justice, allegiance etc is "the sole cause of our approbation" of them (T 578; E II 183). As for the natural virtues these are partly approved of because of their utility (E II 181-82). Thus, for Hume, "[i]n all determinations of morality...public utility is ever principally in view" (E II 180). Given this role played by utility in the formation of value judgements, Hume is convinced that,

reason must enter for a considerable share in all decisions [about usefulness or utility]...since nothing but that faculty can instruct us in the tendency of qualities and actions, and point out their beneficial consequences to society and to their possessor

...And a very accurate reason or judgement is often requisite, to give the true determination, amidst such intricate doubts arising from obscure or opposite utilities...[R]eason, when fully assisted and improved...instruct[s] us in the pernicious or useful tendency of qualities and action (E II 285-86).

Clearly, the "reason" which Hume talks about in the above quote is probable reasoning, for Hume is talking about the production of beliefs about causal relations, beliefs which are used to determine the utility of "qualities and actions" in the moral and political realms, and, thus, assist us in determining what is valuable in these areas, what ought to be approved of or disapproved of. Now, earlier we saw that, for Hume, moral judgements are made from the impartial point of view of the spectator. Thus, when using probable reasoning to discover "the pernicious or useful tendency of qualities and actions", we do so as spectators.

For Hume, then, reasoning (as impartial spectators) about matters of fact (i.e. probable reasoning), and the matter-of-fact beliefs such reasoning produces about causal relations, are employed by us in our formulation of moral and political beliefs. Now, we already know that, in the realm of "real existence", past experience can lead to false conclusions, and that to avoid this problem reflection is required. In other words, to reason justly about "real existence" and acquire sound beliefs in this area, experimental reasoning is necessary. Given that matter-of-fact reasoning, and matter-of-fact beliefs, play a role in our value judgements, it follows that past experience (on its own) can lead to mistaken beliefs in the area of value. Such mistaken beliefs, Hume thinks, can be rectified by the experimental method of reasoning:

If any false [moral] opinion, embraced from appearances, has been found to prevail; as soon as father experience and sounder reasoning have given us juster notions of human affairs, we retract our first sentiment, and adjust anew the boundaries of moral good and evil (E II 180; my emphasis).

People have made, do make, and will continue to make mistakes about beliefs in the area of value. Such mistakes are the result of unsound reasoning. We noted earlier that, according to Hume, the foundations "upon which men reason" and acquire their moral beliefs are universal, but that "the conclusions they draw are often very different" (E II 335-36). Not only are they different, but many times mistaken. This is because men do not reason correctly. As a result, their moral sentiments are led astray. The experimental method of reasoning can correct the direction of these sentiments (which, of course, must be those of the spectator) and supply people with the correct moral beliefs and values: "[T]he original principles of [approval and disapproval]...are uniform...[but] erroneous conclusions can be corrected by sounder reasoning and larger experience" (E II 336; my emphasis). Thus, while moral and political rules and standards are not derived from reason, but from the sentiments of human nature, experimental reasoning (from an impartial point of view) can (and must) guide and correct these sentiments. Moral and political rules and standards cannot be (and ought not to be) established independently of human nature. But impartial experimental reasoning can (and ought to) be used to direct human nature to its proper rules and standards.⁸

And here we should note that, what is true of moral and political rules and standards, is also true of moral and political ends. Accord-

ing to Hume, "the ultimate ends of human action [including moral and political ends] can never...be accounted for by reason, but recommend themselves entirely to the sentiments and affections of mankind, without any dependance on the intellectual faculties" (E II 293). Hume has been taken as telling us here that reason plays no role in the choice of moral and political ends. These ends are adopted non-rationally.⁹ But this is not so. Hume makes it clear that the sentiments upon which ends are founded are those of "blame or approbation" (E II 294), sentiments which, as we have seen, belong to the spectator.¹⁰ Given this, it seems that when Hume tells us that ends are not founded upon reason, the "reason" he has in mind is intuitive or demonstrative reason. As spectators, armed with experimental reasoning, we can determine which ends ought to be approved or disapproved of by our sentiments. Ends are not founded on rationalist reason, nor are they established independently of human nature. But, at the same time, it is also true that the ends which ought to be pursued must be established with the help of impartial experimental reasoning.¹¹

Impartial experimental reasoning can (and must) be used to improve our moral and political beliefs (rules, standards, ends, values). Of course, these beliefs which will not be "knowledge" (in Hume's strict sense), given that probable reasoning is involved in their formulation. They will be either proofs or probabilities, that is, they will either be certain and completely free from doubt, or there will be some degree of uncertainty about them. And here we should note that Hume believes that moral and political beliefs can be held with certainty. Thus, Hume talks of "eternal and immutable" political principles (Essays 18), of "eternal political truths" (Essays 21) and of "maxim[s] in politics, which we readily admit as undisputed and universal" (Essays 374). That

Hume believes that certainty is possible in the moral and political realms should be clear from the previous chapter. Hume never doubts that hereditary monarchies are superior to elective ones. He never doubts that parties of principle and of affection are disruptive while parties of interest are "reasonable and excusable". He never doubts the value of luxury, commerce, etc.¹² Thus, allied with the experimental method of reasoning, mitigated scepticism,

preserv[es] a proper impartiality in our judgements, and wean[s] our minds from all those prejudices, which we may have imbibed from education^[13] or rash opinion. To begin with clear and self-evident principles, to advance by timorous and sure steps, to review frequently our conclusions, and examine accurately all their consequences; though by these means we shall make both a slow and a short progress in our systems; are the only methods, by which we can ever hope to reach truth, and attain a proper stability and certainty in our determinations (E I 150).

But it should be emphasised here that the "truth" and "certainty" with which Hume holds his moral and political beliefs is not that of a dogmatist. Hume is a mitigated sceptic and, as we have seen, mitigated sceptics hold their beliefs with "modesty", "humility" and "reserve", and have no "prejudice against antagonists."¹⁴

The experimental method of reasoning can (and ought to) be used (from the point of view of a spectator) to improve our moral and political beliefs. Hume gives us a number of examples. In the past it was thought that charity "to common beggars" was praiseworthy. But today, experience and reflection show us that this view is false. Experi-

mental reasoning also shows us the falsity of the long held political beliefs that tyrannicide ought to be practised, and that "[l]iberality in princes is...a mark of beneficence", and of the moral/political belief that luxury is evil (E II 180-81). The experimental method of reasoning, then, can (and ought to) be used to dislodge old pernicious moral and political values and replace them with new and sound ones.

And with this we arrive at what is for us a very important conclusion, namely, that Hume has a method of reasoning which allows him, indeed requires him, to break away from the past where necessary and formulate moral and political beliefs which are new and novel. Hume's method of reasoning does not saddle him with any sort of conservative reformism. But neither, we should note, does it leave room in his thought for radicalism. Past experience (particularly of man's nature) plays a central role in the experimental method of reasoning. Thus, the results of this method are connected to the past. We must never ignore the past when pursuing a better future in the realm of human affairs. We must never use a priori reasoning as our guide. Those who do are "[m]en of bright fancies", and "may...be compar'd to those angles, whom the scripture represents as covering their eyes with their wings" (T 267). Thus, Hume dismisses "any fine imaginary republic, of which a man may form a plan in his closet" (Essays 52). Such "political projectors" who seek reform on the basis of an a priori plan, ignoring the past, ignoring man's nature, and relying only on their "bright fancies", ought to be avoided: "Of all mankind there are none so pernicious as political projectors, if they have power; nor so ridiculous, if they want it" (Essays 647). Rationalist reasoning is a dangerous guide of human life. But this does not mean that the only way forward is on the basis of custom alone. Our choice is not limited

to these two alternatives. There is, Hume thinks, a third way, experimental reasoning, a method of reasoning which leaves room for conservative/radical reformism.

IV

Hume never tells us that the customary and well-established in society ought to be blindly preserved. As Stewart says "[Hume's] History of England...abounds in outspoken denunciations of certain prevalent opinions and established laws and institutions as bad, iniquitous, disgusting, irrational, violent, barbarous."¹⁵ But not only is this work awash with condemnations of well-established practices and beliefs. In it we also find Hume approving of significant deviations from such practices and beliefs. A few examples from The History of England will bring out both these points.

Elizabeth had made Ireland part of the Kingdom. But "the more difficult task remained; to civilize the inhabitants, to reconcile them to laws and industry, and to render the subjection durable and useful to the crown of England." This task was achieved by James I. How? Partly by abolishing a number of "Irish customs, which supplied the place of laws, and which were calculated to keep that people for ever in a state of barbarism and disorder." The pernicious customs in question which James was right to extirpate included that of Brehon which punished all criminals, including murderers, "by fine or pecuniary mulct", and the customs of Gavelkinde and Tanistry which dealt "with the same absurdity in the distribution of property" (H 5 47). Thus, in order to civilize and bring law and order to the Irish, James, with Hume's full support, had to abolish a number of that

people's long-established destructive customs.

Hume also endorses the progressive reforms that James introduced in the religious practices of the Scottish and the English. Hume approves of the Scottish Reformation. It "proved so salutary in the consequences" (H 5 67). Among the beneficial results of the overthrow of the "ancient religion" was that it brought the church under "the regular execution of justice" (H 3 324). But the new religion laboured under a great imperfection, namely, its "species of devotion" (H 5 68). Briefly, the form of devotion of the Scottish church was "the most naked and most simple imaginable", having neither ceremonies nor rites, but involving only "contemplation of the divine Essence, which discovers itself to the understanding only." But this type of devotion, Hume thinks, has adverse consequences. It creates people who are "independent and disorderly", who have "a contempt of authority" and lack tolerance. Further, it creates people with "a gloomy and sullen disposition" (H 5 68). For these reasons Hume approves of James' efforts to alter the Scottish church's form of devotion by introducing into it ceremonies and rites and furnishing churches with organs and "the finer arts", and generally with things that "please the senses" (H 5 68-69). Hume approves of the way "James shocked, in so violent a manner, the religious principles of his Scottish subjects" (H 5 73). At the same time, he also endorses James' efforts to reform the religious principles of the English by trying, as he did with the Scottish church, "to infuse cheerfulness into...[their] dark spirit of devotion" (H 5 73).

Remaining with the reign of James I, we find Hume approving of the 1604 Commons' aim "to give liberty to the trading part of the nation... to free the landed property from the burthen of wardships, and to

remove those remains of the feudal tenures, under which the nation still laboured" (H 5 20-21). Again, Hume speaks with approval of the fact that, in the Commons of 1610 "[t]he leading members [of that House], men of independent genius and large views, began to regulate their opinions, more by the future consequences which they foresaw, than by the former precedents which were set before them; and they less aspired at maintaining the ancient constitution, than at establishing a new one, and a freer, and a better" (H 5 42).

V

Hume never says that we ought to be guided blindly by our past beliefs. Past experience is important, but on its own it is dangerous. It must be improved by further experience and reasoning. Only then will we have an adequate guide of life and be able to successfully break away from the past (where necessary) and embark upon the correct path. Importantly, the reforms advocated in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" are the result of experimental reasoning (as we shall see in Chapter 6). This method ought to be our guide in all areas of life. "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" ought to be our guide in the political area of life.

CHAPTER 4

As mentioned in the "Introduction", a further element of Hume's philosophy that scholars point to in order to support their claim that Hume is restricted to conservative reformism is the picture of man he gives us as a fundamentally conservative being who clings to the established. If this picture is correct and Hume thinks that people cannot be significantly reformed and will not, as a matter of fact, embrace ideas which deviate significantly from what they know, then it is nonsense to talk of his desire to make a practical impact on the public realm either with the non-conservative reforms that we investigated in Chapter 2 or with "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". In this chapter I hope to show that the usual conservative picture of the Humean individual is incorrect. In section I we shall see that the Humean individual has a strong propensity to cling to the established (a propensity which has a number of sources). There can be no doubt about this. However, while it is true that Hume thinks that humans have a strong conservative streak, we shall see in section II that he also thinks that humans are not prepared to rot in the patterns of thought and action with which they are familiar. There are times, Hume thinks, when people do in fact break away from what they are used to. In this chapter, then, we shall see that while scholars are right to point to the conservative tendency of the Humean individual, they are wrong to ignore what we might call the progressive tendency of this individual, that is, a tendency to abandon the customary in favour of something better. The ownership of such a tendency by the Humean individual is, of course, important for our purpose.¹

I

As mentioned, in this section I want to put forward as forcefully as possible the view that the Humean individual is a conservative creature. This is not because I believe that this view is wholly correct. As I said, I do not. However, there is a strong element of truth in this position, and it must be brought out. I shall uncover the conservatism of the Humean individual by revealing his tendency to cling to the existing and established. This tendency, as we noted in the "Introduction", has a number of sources: (a) A direct natural "affection" for the customary; (b) a desire for a good reputation, and (c) a desire for order and stability (and fear of the unknown). All three of these qualities of the Humean individual contribute to his holding on to those practices and beliefs with which he is acquainted. We shall investigate each of them in turn.

A.

One reason why the Humean individual clings to the established is because he has a natural propensity to do so. To see this, we should begin by noting that, for Hume, we are by nature habit-forming creatures: "[H]abit is nothing but one of the principles of nature, and derives all its force from that origin" (T 179). The propensity to acquire habits is "a principle of human nature" (E I 43). In fact, Hume calls this principle "ultimate" in the sense that we are unable to "give the cause of this cause" (E I 43; T 179). He also tells us that it is one of our "natural instincts" (E I 46-47), "a species of instinct or mechanical power" (E I 108; E I 159). In other words, the propensity to acquire habits has been given to us by nature. And

since, as we have already noted, "[n]ature will always maintain her rights" (E I 41), it follows that we cannot but acquire habitual patterns of thought and behaviour.

But how are habits acquired? As a result of exposure to repeated experiences: "[C]ustom can only be the effect of repeated perceptions" (T 198); "[W]e call every thing CUSTOM, which proceeds from a past repetition" (T 102). Thus, repeated exposure to a regularity produces a habitual pattern of thought or behaviour: "[W]hen we have been accustom'd to see one object united to another, our imagination passes from the first to the second, by a natural transition, which precedes reflection, and which cannot be prevented by it" (T 147).

Now, once a habit has been formed we cling to it, for "a constant perseverance in any course of life produces a strong inclination and tendency to continue for the future" (T 133). Once we have formed a mental or behavioural habit (on the basis of repeated past experience), this habit stays with us and duplicates or replicates itself given that "repetition of any particular act or operation produces a propensity to renew the same act or operation, without being impelled by any reasoning or process of the understanding" (E I 43). Repeated experience (or custom) gives us "a facility in the performance of any action or the conception of any object; and afterwards a tendency or inclination towards it" (T 422). That is, exposure to a repeated experience produces an ease in the performance of the practice acquired as a result of that exposure, which in turn produces in us a tendency to continue with that practice.

Thus, according to Hume, humans have a natural inclination, not only to acquire habits or customs, but also to cling to them. Once we experience a mental or behavioural regularity its performance becomes

customary and it will reproduce itself into the future. In one passage, Hume graphically describes the relationship between humans and their customary practices and beliefs as one of "affection": "Such is the effect of custom, that it not only reconciles us to any thing we have long enjoy'd, but even gives us an affection for it, and makes us prefer it to other objects, which may be more valuable, but are less known to us" (T 503; my emphasis). According to Hume, then, we are greatly attached to what we are used to, to the customarily established, and prefer it even when it is less valuable, rational or beneficial than an alternative course of action or thought.² Thus, even though "[n]othing surely can be more absurd and barbarous than the practice of duelling" (E II 335; H 3 169), and even though it is contrary to the "severity of law and authority of reason", still this practice is "far from being as yet entirely exploded." This is due to "the prevailing force of custom" (H 3 169). Again, throughout history, the Commons was never kind with money. In 1625 the Commons clung to this practice and turned down Charles I's request for increased taxation, even though (Hume thinks) there were good reasons for not doing so. Why? Because "[h]abits, more than reason, we find, in every thing, to be the governing principle of mankind" (H 5 159).

For Hume, humans have a natural affection for the customary, so that "custom...[is] the principle by which men are almost wholly governed in their actions and opinions" (H 3 192). This, Hume thinks, is how humans in fact operate, though, as we saw in the previous chapter, he does not think that it is the way they ought to operate.

B.

A second reason why the Humean individual clings to the established

practices and institutions of his society is because of his desire for a good reputation. To properly understand this desire (and how it contributes to Humean man's conservatism) we should begin by noting the natural sociability of Humean man.

As we shall see later, the Humean individual seeks society in order to satisfy his biological and economic needs. But this is not the full story. For even without such needs he would still seek the company of others, because, given his nature, he receives satisfaction from such company. Why? According to Hume, we receive great pleasure from our forceful perceptions: "[T]he vivacity of...[an] idea gives pleasure" (T 453; T 353; T 121-22). As a result of acquiring "a lively sensation ...[t]he blood flows with a new tide: The heart is elevated: And the whole man acquires...vigour" (T 353). Thus, those things which have the consequence of enlivening our perceptions are sought after by humans because of the pleasure that such enlivening gives. Now, Hume thinks that chief among the things that have the result of enlivening our ideas are other people:

Hence company is naturally so rejoicing, as presenting the liveliest of all objects, viz. a rational and thinking Being like ourselves, who communicates to us all the actions of his mind; makes us privy to his inmost sentiments and affections; and lets us see, in the very instant of their production, all the emotions which are caus'd by any object (T 353).

And here we should recall Hume's view noted in Chapter 2 while discussing the beneficial consequences of manufacturing and commerce, that people "flock into cities" in order to to communicate (Essays 271), that is, in order to receive lively perceptions.

Now, this communication of perceptions, of feelings and beliefs, among human minds is the the result sympathetic perception: "[T]is after this manner [i.e sympathy] we enter deep into the opinions and affections of others, whenever we discover them" (T 319). Here we should note that Humean sympathy is not an emotion or feeling, but "a very powerful principle in human nature" (T 577; T 618). It is a mental mechanism.³ How does this mechanism work? Briefly, and without attempting anything like a thorough examination of this complex "principle", Hume thinks that "[t]he minds of all men are similar in their feelings and operations" (T 575) so that "we never remark any passion or principle in others, of which, in some degree or other, we may not find a parallel in ourselves" (T 318). In other words, there is a fundamental resemblance among men in respect of their feelings, sentiments, passions etc. As a result of this resemblance, we can, on the basis of "external signs in the countenance and conversation" of another person, acquire an idea of that person's passion or opinion (T 317). We know from our own experiences that certain types of behaviour are caused by a certain passion, or certain passions. Given that human minds resemble each other in their operations, we can, Hume thinks, make an inference from that person's behaviour to the passion or passions that cause that behaviour. In this way we acquire an idea of the other person's passion. Hume thinks that an idea of another's belief can be acquired in the same way (T 320-21), a belief being nothing more than a lively perception (as we saw in Chapter 3).

But sympathetically perceiving another's passion or opinion involves more than just acquiring an idea of his passion or opinion. It involves making that idea one's own. It involves acquiring an enlivened idea which is felt as our own (T 317; T 427). The idea we receive

(sympathetically) of another's passion or opinion is experienced as our own once it is enlivened. How does this newly received idea become enlivened? According to Hume "the...impression of ourselves is always intimately present with us" and, being an impression, it is always "lively" (T 317; T 320). Given that there is a resemblance among humans, the lively impression of ourselves comes to be associated in the mind with the idea we acquire of another's passion or opinion. Resemblance, then, is the associative relation which lies at the heart of sympathetic perception. Hume goes on to say that the other two associative relations (contiguity and causation) also play a part in enlivening our newly acquired ideas. (In the next chapter we shall have to investigate the exact role played by these three associative relations with regard to sympathetic perception.) "All these relations [of association]...convey the impression or consciousness of our own person to the idea of the sentiments or passions of others" (T 318). Once an associative relation is made between the lively impression of ourselves and the idea we acquire of another's passion or opinion, this impression transmits some of its force to that idea. And, as a result of this transmission of force, the idea of the other's passion or opinion becomes enlivened and is felt as our own. In this way, then, the natural mechanism of sympathy enables us to "enter deep into the opinions and affections of others" (T 319). Sympathy removes us from our own private worlds and brings us in touch with the rest of humanity. As Stewart puts, Humean sympathy enables us to "escape from the egocentricity (or particularity) of primary perception."⁴

Let us now return to the sociability of man. Sympathy is responsible for the communication of impressions and ideas among people. It intensifies our perceptions, and humans, Hume thinks, derive great

satisfaction from intense perceptions. But sympathy can operate only in the company of others. In order for a person to sympathetically perceive the perceptions of others, and thereby intensify his own perceptions, he must, obviously, be around others. Thus, according to Hume, the desire for sympathetic perception contributes to our search for society, for on its own the mind "immediately languishes" (T 421). "The mind...[is] insufficient, of itself, to its own entertainment" and thus seeks those things, primarily other humans, that will give it "a lively sensation, and agitate the spirits" (T 352-53). Thus, man is naturally driven to seek society. He is "the creature of the universe, who has the most ardent desire for society...A perfect solitude is, perhaps, the greatest punishment we can suffer" (T 363).

That humans are fundamentally social beings is important for us, for, according to Hume, humans have a great desire for a good reputation: "There is nothing, which touches us more nearly than our reputation" (T 501). And, as we shall see, the desire for a good reputation can be satisfied only in the company of others, only in society. As we shall also see, this desire for a good reputation is responsible, Hume thinks, for our further desire to conform and cling to the established norms of society. To fully understand this idea we must begin with a brief investigation into Hume's analysis of the passion of pride, for it is this passion which leads us to seek a good reputation. This discussion of pride must be preceded by a brief insight into Hume's account of the passions.

According to Hume, passions are impressions, or rather, impressions of "reflection" (T 7) or "secondary impressions" (T 275), in contrast to "impressions of sensation" (T 7) or "original impressions" (T 275). Under the latter heading Hume places those impressions derived from

"the constitution of the body, from the animal spirits, or from the application of objects to the external senses" (T 275), that is, impressions which "make us perceive heat and cold, thirst and hunger, pleasure and pain" (T 8; T 275). Under the former heading he places impressions derived from "some of these original ones, either immediately or by the interposition of its ideas" (T 275). Thus, impressions of reflection are derived from already present impressions or ideas. Examples of such impressions are desire, fear, hope, and generally "the passions and other emotions resembling them" (T 275; T 8).

Now, Hume divides passions into "direct" and "indirect" ones. Both types of passion "arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure" (T 276), that is, both direct and indirect passions have what Hume calls a "cause" (T 330) in the sense that they are aroused by the pain or pleasure we feel after we have acquired the idea of a pleasant or painful object. However, there is an important difference between these two types of passion: Indirect passions, unlike direct ones, have, not only a "cause" (i.e. the idea of a good or evil object) but also what Hume calls an "object" (T 329), that is, they are directed either to oneself or to another. Both direct and indirect passions "proceed from the same principles [pleasure and pain]" but only the latter "proceed...by the conjunction of other qualities [i.e. the idea of oneself or of another person]" (T 276).

For Hume, the indirect passion of pride is a complex mental state resulting from the "double relation of ideas and impressions" (T 286). The details of this "double relation" are not important for us. All we need to know is that pride, as an indirect passion, has a "cause", namely, the idea of a good or pleasant object, and an "object", namely,

oneself; and that pride is the result of the association in the mind between the idea of a good object and the idea of oneself. Humility, the passion which Hume contrasts to pride, takes the same form, only that its "cause" is a painful object. The next question is what kind of pleasant objects cause pride when associated with the idea of oneself.

As objects of pride Hume lists: Property and wealth, virtue, wit, beauty, rank, family (T 297; T 307-09; T 320; T 599). Here we should note that, for Hume, if these items give pleasure and thus cause pride it is because they are approved of by the public. The public values e.g property. Thus, property becomes a good or pleasant object and when associated with ourselves gives pride. Whether or not an object has value and can be classified as pleasant (and, therefore, gives pride) depends on the opinion of society: "[C]ustom and practice... have settled the just value of every thing; this must certainly contribute to the easy production of the passions, and guide us, by means of general establish'd maxims, in the proportions we ought to observe in preferring one object to another" (T 294). Further, a pleasant object will give us pride only when society sees that this object is in fact associated with us: "[T]he pleasant or painful object [must] be very discernable and obvious, and not only to ourselves, but to others also" (T 292; T 390). For Hume, the individual lives in the eyes of the public.⁵ This will come out clearer in a moment.

Apart from property, wealth, etc, another cause of pride, Hume thinks is the good opinion others have of us, that is, a good reputation: "But besides these original causes of pride...there is a secondary one in the opinions of others...Our reputation, our character, our name are

considerations of vast weight and importance" (T 316). Now, according to Hume, "[i]t is in order to fix and confirm their favourable opinion of themselves, not from any original passion, that...[people] seek the applause of others."⁶ In other words, whether or not we think we have a good reputation depends on society's opinion of us: "Men always consider the sentiments of others in their judgement of themselves" (T 303). And, as we have seen, it is by means of sympathy that we perceive the sentiments of others. Thus, "the pleasure, which we receive from praise, arises from a communication of sentiments" (T 324). According to Hume, then, the possession of a pleasant (socially approved) object causes pride. One such object is a good reputation. But whether or not we have a good reputation depends on the opinion that others have of us. And we come to know the opinion that others have of us by means of sympathy.

Now, Hume thinks that chief among those goods that give us a good reputation is conformity to what the public approves of morally. Thus, [b]y our continual and earnest pursuit of a character, a name, a reputation in the world, we bring our own deportment and conduct frequently in review, and consider how they appear in the eyes of those who approach and regard us. This constant habit of surveying ourselves, as it were, in reflection, keeps alive all the sentiments of right and wrong (E II 276).

Conformity to the social standards of right and wrong is applauded by the public, particularly conformity to the standards of justice: "There is nothing, which touches us more nearly than our reputation, and nothing on which our reputation depends more than our conduct, with

relation to the property of others" (T 501). And given, as we shall see in the next chapter, the connection between justice and allegiance (for Hume, the duties of allegiance "are invented chiefly for the sake of" a better "execution of justice" (T 543)), it comes as no surprise that, in Hume's view, actions which are not consistent with the duties of allegiance (i.e. rebellion) are regarded by the public as immoral (T 545). This indicates that, for Hume, people will avoid anti-governmental actions in order not to harm their reputation and will, in fact, strive to abide by the duties of allegiance in order to acquire a good name.

Thus, since people desire a good reputation, and since chief among those things which contribute to their good reputation is conformity to moral standards, particularly the rules of justice and allegiance, it follows that people will make every effort to conform to these rules in order to win the approval of the public and, thereby, enhance their reputation. For, "[t]he most inviolable attachment to the laws of our country is every where acknowledged a capital virtue; and where the people are not so happy, as to have any legislature but a single person, the strictest loyalty is, in that case, the truest patriotism" (E II 335).

What we have, then, is the following: Given people's desire for a good reputation, they will refrain from straying from what society approves of in the area of morality. And since the moral virtue which contributes greatest to our good reputation is justice it follows that people will strive to abide by the rules of justice. Given this, and given that the rules of allegiance exist for the sake of justice, it follows that people will also strive hard to adhere to the rules of allegiance. They will, it seems, never think of changing their object

of allegiance, but always remain loyal to the existing government. It seems, then, that the Humean individual's desire for a good reputation has very conservative consequences.

C.

Up to this point we have seen that the Humean individual clings to the established because (a) he has a natural propensity to do so, and (b) because he has a desire for a good reputation (though this will lead him to cling only to his moral/political practices and institutions and not to non-moral/political ones). But there is a third reason why the Humean individual will adhere to the established, namely, his desire for stability and order. According to Hume, we have a "love of order" (T 504 fn. 1). This love comes out clearly in Hume's conjectural account of the origin of justice and government. We shall look at this account in the next chapter. Here, we shall turn our attention to a number of other passages and we shall see that, according to Hume, the desire for stability leads humans to adhere to their established and familiar practices.

According to Hume, hope and fear are direct passions (T 439). This means that these passions arise as a result of acquiring the idea of a good or pleasant object (in the case of hope), or the idea of an evil or painful object (in the case of fear). Hume thinks that the objects which cause hope and fear have an existence, for us, which is uncertain. That is, hope and fear are produced by good and bad objects "concerning whose reality we are doubtful" (T 440). Now, Hume tells us that given "that human nature is in general pusillanimous", when we are confronted with an object in whose existence we are not sure whether to believe or disbelieve, we are more likely to feel fear than hope (T

446), for there is "[a] principle of the connexion of fear with uncertainty" (T 447), so that objects with the quality of uncertainty frighten us. Uncertain ideas lack vivacity, and since, as we have seen, vivid ideas give pleasure, it follows that weak and uncertain ones cause pain: "As the vivacity of the idea gives pleasure, so its certainty prevents uneasiness, by fixing one particular idea in the mind, and keeping it from wavering in the choice of its objects...As 'tis the nature of doubt to cause a variation in the thought, and to transport us suddenly from one idea to another, it must of consequence be the occasion of pain" (T 453). In other words, ideas which lack the force of certainty, which are unstable, are avoided by the mind because of the pain they cause. The mind finds peace and relief in certainty, and what is more certain than our stable and habitual patterns and practices? Thus, by making it a principle of the mind that there is a connection between uncertainty and uneasiness, Hume shows us his belief that the human mind loves order and stability, and that therefore it prefers the customary and established.

Hume also tells us that an idea causes pain when it is "strange", that is, new or novel. When the mind is confronted with the unfamiliar it becomes fearful: "The suddenness and strangeness of an appearance naturally excite a commotion in the mind...This commotion...naturally produces...the sensation of fear" (T 446; my emphasis). Since the mind is pained by "strangeness", by anything new which upsets its stable expectations, it will prefer the stability of the customary to the instability of the new and novel. As we noted earlier: "The mind finds a satisfaction and ease in the view of objects, to which it is accustom'd, and naturally prefers them to others, which, tho', perhaps, in themselves more valuable, are less known to it" (T 355).

As the above quote from T 446 makes clear, the Humean mind is also pained by the sudden appearance of a perception. According to Hume, "every thing that is unexpected affrights us" (T 446). And "[t]is a quality of human nature...common both to mind and body, that too sudden and violent a change is unpleasant to us, and that however any objects may in themselves be indifferent, yet their alteration gives uneasiness" (T 453). In other words, when our habitual patterns of thought and behaviour, our customary expectations, are not met, but are violently disturbed, we become uneasy. The implication is that we find comfort in the stable and therefore in the habitual. We desire stability and the habitual can give us this.

II

On the basis of what has been said so far it would seem that the non-conservative reformer has an impossible task before him. Humean man's natural affection for the customary, his desire for a good name, and his love of order and fear of the new and unknown all seem to combine to ensure that he will never deviate in any significant way from that which is established. However, this is not so.

As Laursen notes, Hume knows very well that, as a matter of fact, people do quit their habitual patterns of thought and behaviour.⁷ Thus, we find Hume talking about "all the variations, which human affairs, in their incessant revolutions, are susceptible of" (T 533). According to Hume, "since the fall of Greece and Rome...many changes have arrived in religion, language, laws, and customs" (E II 336). "Of Eloquence" begins with the following sentence: "Those, who consider the periods and revolutions of human kind, as represented in history, are enter-

tained with a spectacle full of pleasure and variety, and see, with surprize, the manners, customs, and opinions of the same species susceptible of such prodigious changes in different periods of time" (Essays 97). And in "Of the Standard of Taste" Hume displays his impatience with those who "make no allowance for the continual revolutions of manners and customs" (Essays 246), while in "Of National Characters" he tells us that "[t]he manners of a people change very considerably from one age to another; either by great alterations in their government, by the mixtures of new people, or by that inconsistency, to which all human affairs are subject" (Essays 205-06). All this indicates that, for Hume, even though humans have a strong propensity to cling to the established, they also have a propensity to abandon it. Later, we shall see how these two conflicting propensities can be reconciled. At this point, however, we should make clear that the Humean individual's tendency to break away from the established also comes out (importantly for us) in Hume's discussion of the maintenance of government, that is, of the "surprizing...easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and the implicit submission, with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers" (Essays 32).

According to Hume, it cannot be that the many are governed by the few as a result of force, for "FORCE is always on the side of the governed [i.e the many]" (Essays 32). And even in those cases where a ruler's power does depend on the force of his army "he must, at least, have led [his army]...by their opinion" (Essays 33). Thus Hume is led to the conclusion that "[i]t is, therefore, on opinion only that government is founded" (Essays 32). Only opinion (or belief) can explain how and why the many follow the few. This phenomenon cannot be explained by either fear, self-interest, or affection. The latter two have a restricted

scope. Only some members of society will be moved to support the government by either self-interest or affection for the ruler. And, anyway, self-interest can function only once a ruler is in power (Essays 34). This latter point applies to the principle of fear too. Fear can operate only once a ruler is in a position to wield power and carry out his threats (Essays 34).

The opinion which, according to Hume, maintains government, is of "two kinds, to wit, opinion of INTEREST, and opinion of RIGHT" (Essays 33). Hume further divides opinion of right into "right to POWER and right to PROPERTY" (Essays 33). "Upon these three opinions, therefore, of public interest, of right to power, and of right to property, are all governments founded, and all authority of the few over the many" (Essays 34). For our purposes the important opinions are those of interest and right to power.

Opinion of Interest: The interest here is not, as we have seen, self-interest or "expectation of particular rewards" (Essays 34). Rather, it is "public interest", that is, "the general advantage which is reaped from government" (Essays 33). What "general advantage" is provided by government? "[S]ecurity" (Essays 33) and "general protection" (Essays 34). As we have seen, Hume thinks that people desire stability and order and (as we shall see) they achieve this by establishing government. Having established a government people see that it provides them with security, and after repeatedly experiencing this "general advantage" provided by the established government they form the habitual belief that this advantage will continue into the future. Thus, they give this government their support, a support founded on habit.

However, we should note that Hume thinks that people will abandon

this habitual belief (and, thus their government) once they see that it is no longer the case that their government serves the public interest of stability and order. Having investigated the way in which humans operate in this area, Hume the anatomist comes to the conclusion that when deciding whether or not to support their government people always take into account its "evident tendency to the public good" (T 561). For "common sense", tells them that "the safety of the people is the supreme law", so that when obeying a government no longer serves the "public utility" but, instead, would lead to "public ruin", people will withdraw their support for that government (Essays 489): "Government is a mere human invention for the interest of society. Where the tyranny of the governor removes this interest, it also removes the natural obligation to obedience" (T 552). Hume goes on to say that "'tis certain, that all men have an implicit notion of [this train of thought]...and are sensible, that they owe obedience to government merely on account of the public interest" (T 553). This, Hume thinks, is how people in fact reason, and in the next chapter we shall see that he thinks that this is how they ought to reason.

Opinion of right to Power: I think that the best place to begin our analysis of this opinion is with Hume's historical account of the origin of government. (Hume also gives us a conjectural account of the origin of government which we shall look at in the next chapter). In this account government arises from "a state of war" (Essays 39; Essays 468). But this war is not a war among members of the same society. Rather, it is a war between different societies: "[Governments]...arise from quarrels, not among men of the same societies, but among those of different societies" (T 540). In these wars "the pernicious effects of

disorder are most sensibly felt" (Essays 40), and, to fight such wars successfully, in order to overcome the disorder they cause, a society sees the need for a leader who will coordinate its actions. Once such a leader emerges, then "[a] long continuance of that state...enure[s] the people to submission" (Essays 40; my emphasis). In other words, once a leader emerges in society to help fight wars efficiently, in order that stability may be maintained, and this leader remains in power for a long period, thereby exposing the people to a repeated experience, the people, given their tendency to acquire habits and cling to these, grow accustomed to the ruler and retain him (and his successors) in power. In the eyes of the people, government is "sanctified by time" (HGB 225 fn. 4). So powerful is the sanctity of time (and custom) that "men, once accustomed to obedience, never think of departing from that path, in which they and their ancestors have constantly trod" (Essays 39).

[S]ubjects...suppose themselves born under obligations of obedience to a certain sovereign, as much as under the ties of reverence and duty to certain parents...Obedience or subjection becomes so familiar, that most men never make any enquiry about its origin or cause...Or if curiosity ever move them; as soon as they learn, that they themselves and their ancestors have, for several ages, or from time immemorial, been subject to such a form of government or such a family; they immediately acquiesce, and acknowledge their obligation to allegiance (Essays 470).

It is this sanctity bestowed upon a government by time and custom that lies at the heart of Hume's account of the opinion of right to power.

In the case of this opinion, people form the habitual belief that a government is worthy of support as a result of time and custom: "Time and custom give authority to all forms of government" (T 566). Once people have, over a period of time, repeatedly experienced the rule of a government, they form (as always when exposed to repeated experiences) the habitual belief that this government has the right to rule. And, like all habits, this one too is extended into the future. Time and custom give a government the "sanction of antiquity" (Essays 33), and cause a people to form an "attachment...to their ancient government" (Essays 33).

However, while it is true that, for Hume, "[a]ntiquity always begets the opinion of right" (Essays 33), it is also true that he thinks that people will abandon a government even if it is backed by time and custom. In an important passage Hume presents us with the following thought experiment:

For instance; a government is establish'd for many centuries on a certain system of laws, forms, and methods of succession. The legislative power, establish'd by this long succession, changes all on a sudden the whole system of government, and introduces a new constitution in its stead. I believe few of the subjects will think themselves bound to comply with this alteration, unless it have an evident tendency to the public good: But will think themselves at liberty to return to the antient government (T 561; my emphasis).

Now, whatever else is going on here, it is clear that, according to Hume, if the people see that changing an established practice is

beneficial to the public interest, then they will accept this change. They are even willing to abandon an "antient government" and embrace a new constitution if this is in the public good! It seems, then, that in the eyes of the Humean individual public interest has priority over "antiquity" and the sanctity of time. Whether or not people follow their "antient government" depends on whether or not it contributes to the public interest. To take a concrete example: The authority of the Stuarts was founded solely on the habitual opinion of right to power: "[T]he house of Stuarts, was possessed of a very extensive authority ...[T]his authority was founded merely on the opinion of the people, influenced by ancient precedent and example. It was not supported either by money or by the force of arms" (H 5 128). However, even though the rule of the Stuarts had the "sanction of antiquity", the people, were not reluctant to overthrow James II. Why? Because James threatened the public good. According to Hume, in the century or so before the Stuarts came to power "a new plan of liberty, founded on the privileges of the commons" was emerging in England as a result of the rise of the "middle rank of men" (H 4 384). Further, due to the rise of Puritanism, the people were beginning to support the cause of civil liberty (H 4 123-24). Thus, by the time the Stuarts came to power, the people were in full support of the ideals of liberty, limited monarchy, and the independence of parliament. Unfortunately, the Stuarts failed to recognise this and clung to "exalted notions of monarchy and the authority of princes" (H 5 45). They clung to the practices of absolutism, including the king's "dispensing power", the power that allowed the king to overturn any act of parliament by decree. This power, however, was inconsistent with the people's ideas of an independent parliament and civil liberty. Thus, "the nation thought it

[i.e the dispensing power] dangerous, if not fatal to liberty" (H 6 476) and saw the need to overthrow James. He was a threat to liberty, a threat to the public good. His rule was inconsistent with what the public took to be its utility.

According to Hume, antiquity supports a government, but only so long as the people also think that this government is acting in their interest. It seems, then, it is not the case that people "once accustom'd to obedience, never think of departing from that path, in which they and their ancestors have constantly trod" (Essays 39). Hume is clearly overstating his case here. Hume states his case clearer at T 561 above where he links in the minds of people rule, and long established rule in particular, with a concern for the public interest. An even better statement of this position comes out in "Of the Original Contract" where Hume tells us that only "[w]hen people are so happy" (my emphasis) will they answer the question, "[T]o whom is allegiance due? And who is our lawful sovereign?" with the answer "Our present sovereign, who inherits, in a direct line, from ancestors, that have governed us for many ages" (Essays 481). Thus, again we see that, according to Hume, whether or not a sovereign makes a people "happy", whether or not his rule is in their interest, plays the important part in determining whether or not a people will give this sovereign their allegiance.

Thus, as with the habitual opinion of interest, the habitual opinion of the right to power will be abandoned by the people if they think it is necessary to do so. That Hume thinks that people do in fact abandon their object of allegiance, even if it is sanctioned by time and custom, is important for us. For the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth will, of course, require that people alter their object of

allegiance. If Hume's view was that people always resist such an alteration, then clearly we would have to question the seriousness of "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth", given that such a view would preclude the possibility of the Perfect Commonwealth's being introduced into the public realm. But this is not Hume's view. Rather, his view is that people do in fact withdraw their allegiance from an established sovereign, for "all men...are sensible, that they owe obedience to government merely on account of public interest" (T 553). When a ruler no longer serves the public good, then people will abandon him. This, according to Hume the anatomist, is the way people as a matter of fact operate. In the next chapter we shall see that Hume thinks that this is the way people ought to operate, and that there are times when they ought to withdraw their allegiance from an established ruler.

So, while it is true that people will support that ruler who has time and custom on his side, it is also true that sometimes, in the name of public interest, such rulers are abandoned. Hume knows that people do in fact turn against their governments. He knows that "[w]hoever considers the history of the several nations of the world" will uncover, not only their "conquests, increase, and diminution" but also "their revolutions" (T 562). Hume knows that "[a]ll human institutions, and none more than government, are in continual fluctuation" (Essays 494-95). And The History of England is filled with examples of such fluctuations.

But now we have a problem. We have seen that the Humean individual is deeply concerned about his reputation, and that he thinks that what contributes most to his good reputation is conformity to society's moral standards, including the duty of allegiance. But now we discover that the Humean individual is in fact prepared to abandon his object of

allegiance. Thus the question arises of how the Humean individual, who has such a concern for his reputation, will find it possible to neglect his duty of allegiance and abandon his government. It seems that for the sake of a good reputation he will not turn his back on his government, even a bad one. But, in fact, he does. How are we to solve this problem?

I think that the best way we can deal with this problem is by linking the Humean individual's desire for a good reputation, not with obedience to government as such, but with obedience to a government which is in the public interest. Given that Hume thinks that a person will in fact cease to be loyal to his government if that government does not promote the good of the public, we can say that, for Hume, a person's reputation (in the case of the duty of allegiance) depends, not upon obedience to government, but, rather upon obedience to a government which serves the public good. Thus, if someone resists a government which is seen by the people as having a tendency to the public good, then his reputation will suffer. However, if he resists a government which all can see does nothing for the public good, and is even contrary to this good, then such resistance will not harm his reputation. This is the best way we can solve our problem, I think. And clearly, there is room for such a position in Hume's thought.

III

It would be very surprising if Hume held the view that people never abandon the beliefs, practices, and institutions which they are used to. If he did he would never have sought to modernise the science of man, put it "on a new footing" (T Intro xvii), and then try to expose

it to the public. He would never have sought to get "the republic of letters...[to] shake off the yoke of authority...[so that men can become] accustom[ed]...to think for themselves (T Abstract 644). He would never have had the ambition of introducing into the public realm the new and novel ideas investigated in Chapter 2. The fact that he did shows us, I think, that he did not hold the view that people are always so conservative that they never abandon the established.

Of course, Hume does not think that people will renounce the established at the drop of a hat. This should be clear from what was said in section I above. As we saw, Hume talks about the deep affection that we have for custom, the fear and uneasiness caused by new ideas which disrupt our customary expectations, and the comfort we find in what is familiar. We cannot ignore these passages. But I think that in these passages Hume is overstating his case. It would be surprising if Hume, whose works contain new ideas which were written for the public, believed it to be an absolute truth that humans always cling to the customary and always fear new and novel ideas. For otherwise he would never have presented the public with such ideas. But he did, and this indicates that in those passages in which Hume rigidly talks about our aversion to the abandonment of the customary and the fear and pain caused by novel ideas, he is overstating his case.

The conservative tendency of the Humean individual must be taken seriously. But we must also take seriously Hume's talk of "continual revolutions of manners and customs" (Essays 246); we must take seriously his condemnation of pernicious established beliefs; we must take seriously his attempt to introduce new ideas into the public realm. To over-emphasise Hume's conservative conception of the individual and ignore what we might call the progressive tendency he

attributes to the individual, is wrong.

If it is true that Hume attributes to man a conservative and a progressive tendency, then it might seem that he has given us an inconsistent picture of man. I don't think so. I think these two tendencies can be reconciled. To see this we must turn to a passage in the Treatise in which, I think, Hume gives us his true view about the relationship between people and new ideas, a view which reconciles the conservative and the progressive tendencies that (as we have seen) he attributes to man; a view which, thus, takes both these tendencies seriously. At the beginning of Section 10, Part III, Book I of the Treatise, Hume, talking about the reception of his novel views by the public, tells us that "education...prevails...in the world, and is the cause why all systems [including his own] are apt to be rejected at first as new and unusual" (T 118; my emphasis). Now, as we have seen, for Hume, education is founded on repeated experience or custom (T 116-17). Thus, Hume's claim in the above quote is this: Given the authority that custom has over the human mind, ideas which are not in harmony with the public's customary expectations, ideas which are "new and unusual", are very likely to be rejected by the public. But only "at first", as the above quote makes very clear. Thus, as the public comes to see the truth of Hume's new and novel ideas (or of anyone else's for that matter) they will come to embrace these, abandoning false established ideas in the process. This is exactly what happened with "Harvey's doctrine of the circulation of blood" (H 6 154). At first it was met with hostility as people clung to their well-established "factious or superstitious prejudices." But eventually this true doctrine was accepted. "[S]low is the progress of truth in every science" Hume laments (H 6 154), given people's tendency to cling

to what they are used to and their fear of the new. But there is "progress", there are "revolutions" in the area of habits and people do, eventually, come to embrace new ideas, new ideas that "at first" shocked them and were, thus, rejected. Beliefs, practices, and institutions are subject to change, significant change, even though people have a propensity to cling to the established. While the Humean individual's affection for his familiar patterns of thought and behaviour is strong, and while he has an inherent dislike for the novel, neither this affection nor this dislike are so strong as to cause him to rot in the established. For Hume there is progress, but, as Stewart notes, it is slow: "All advances towards reason and good sense are slow and gradual" (H 1 359).⁸

All this, of course, is important for our purpose. For if Hume's view was that people are so conservative that they never accept ideas which deviate significantly from what they have inherited, then we would have to side with those scholars who argue that Hume was a conservative reformer, and regard as amusements both the conservative/radical reforms we investigated in Chapter 2 and "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" itself. But humans are not, in Hume's view, fundamentally conservative. They are, Hume thinks, capable of embracing new and novel ideas and (as we saw) are even prepared to accept significant reforms made to their established constitution if such reforms have "an evident tendency to the public good" (T 561). Of course, they have a deep conservative streak, and this precludes the possibility of reforming them radically. But we are not arguing here that Hume was a radical reformer. We are not trying to show that there is room in his thought for radical reformism. What we are trying to show is that he was a conservative/radical reformer and that there is room for such

reformism in his thought. Hume's conception of man as a being with a conservative and a progressive streak leaves such room. It is in harmony with the picture of Hume the reformer we are trying to promote in this thesis.

CHAPTER 5

As mentioned in the "Introduction", our aim in this chapter will be to investigate the third and final reason why some have argued that Hume is confined to conservative reformism, namely, because, for him, society is held together by the habitually founded conventional rules of justice and allegiance. Given this view, it is said that Hume could not have endorsed the introduction into society of any reforms which were not conservative. For any attempt to reform society in a non-conservative fashion would threaten the habits supporting justice and allegiance, thus bringing down society. In this chapter I want to show that, while it is true that, for Hume, society is supported by the habits of justice and allegiance, this does not dictate that he is restricted to being a conservative reformer. The role Hume assigns to habit in keeping society together is consistent with his being a conservative/radical reformer.¹

I

Justice, for Hume, is made up of three elements, namely "the stability of possession, of its transference by consent, and of the performance of promises" (T 526). Together, these elements form "The Laws of Nature" (T 484; T 509n; T 526; E II 305).² Now, there can be no doubt that, for Hume, society coheres as a result of these three rules of justice. Again and again Hume expressly makes this point. To note just a few passages:

[W]ithout justice, society must immediately dissolve and every one must fall into that savage and solitary condition, which is infinitely worse than the

worst situation that can possibly be suppos'd in society [i.e the state of nature] (T 497).

'Tis on the strict observance of...[justice] that the peace and security of human society entirely depend...[Justice is] absolutely necessary to the support of society (T 526).

[By justice] alone they can preserve society, and keep themselves from falling into that wretched and savage condition, which is commonly represented as the state of nature (T 534).

[J]ustice is founded entirely on the interests of society...in order to preserve peace among mankind (Essays 489).

It is clear, then, that, for Hume, without justice there can be no society. Justice supports society. Now, Hume thinks that the rules of allegiance to government exist for the sake of justice:

[O]ur civil duties are connected with our natural, that the former are invented chiefly for the sake of the latter; and that the principle object of government is to constrain men to observe the laws of nature (T 543).

OBEDIENCE is a new duty which must be invented to support that of JUSTICE; and the tyes of equity must be corroborated by those of allegiance (Essays 38).

Given the relationship between justice and allegiance, and given that justice supports society, it is clear that, for Hume, the rules of allegiance to government are as necessary for the continued existence of society as are the rules of justice. Both justice and allegiance support society. But what supports justice and allegiance?

According to Hume, these "are not supported by any original instinct of nature" (Essays 480), and this is why Hume labels justice and allegiance "artificial virtues" (e.g T 484; T 546; T 577; LG 30-31).³ Justice is not the "immediate offspring of any natural motive or inclination" (T 532; my emphasis. The reason for this emphasis will become clear later). "[T]hose impressions, which give rise to ...[the] sense of justice, are not natural to the mind of man" (T 496). And the same is true of allegiance: "Our primary instincts lead us, either to indulge ourselves in unlimited freedom, or to seek dominion over others: And it is reflection only, which engages us to sacrifice such strong passions to the interests of peace and public order" (Essays 480). True, as we shall see later, Hume thinks that justice and allegiance are founded on human nature, and are not invented by man. But neither corresponds directly to any natural affection. What, then, enables these two virtues to gain hold and flourish? The answer, we shall see, is custom, or habit. Without certain habits there can be neither justice nor allegiance, and, therefore, no society. Our task in the next section will be uncover these important habits. We shall do this by investigating Hume's conjectural account of how civil society arises. But here I should warn the reader that, in this investigation, I shall focus only on those aspects of this account which are important for our purpose (i.e to reveal the customs underlying justice and allegiance). What

is not relevant for us will be either ignored or dealt with very briefly. Unfortunately, we have no time for side-trips.

II

In giving us his conjectural history of civil society, Hume investigates the interaction between the nature of man, on the one hand, and man's external situation, on the other.⁴ We have already noted that Hume takes human nature to be constant. Having discovered, in his role as an anatomist, the principles of this constant nature, Hume explains why humans come to embrace the rules of justice and allegiance by investigating the interaction between these principles and the general condition of human life. Justice is the result of "inconveniences, which proceed from the concurrence of certain qualities of the human mind with the situation of external objects" (T 494). And the same is true of allegiance. Both arise "from the circumstances and necessity of mankind" (T 477), from the "nature and situation of man" (E II 194). What is this "nature and situation" which gives rise to the artificial virtues of justice and allegiance?

According to Hume, man's "first state and situation may justly be esteem'd social" (T 493), for "[m]an...[is] born in a family" (Essays 37). The family is inseparable from the human species, given that it is based on two principles which are themselves an inseparable part of human nature, namely, "the natural appetite betwixt the sexes" and the "natural affection" that parents have for their children (T 486). But even as part of a family, man is unable to acquire the goods he needs and wants (T 484-85). This desire for goods, "avidity", is very strong in man: "This avidity alone, of acquiring goods and

possessions for ourselves and our nearest friends, is insatiable, perpetual, [and] universal" (T 491-92). What people must do in order to satisfy their "avidity" and supply themselves and their loved ones with what they need and want is to venture outside their intimate circles and establish an economic or commercial society.⁵ Such a society "is absolutely necessary for the well-being of men" (T 526). It is "necessary to their well-being and subsistence" (T 489). For, it is only by means of a commercial society, only by means of economic relationships with those outside their intimate circle, that each individual "is able to supply his defects...By [economic] society all his infirmities are compensated" (T 485).

From self-interested reasons, therefore, humans venture out of their intimate circles and begin to associate with others to gain "additional force, ability, and security" (T 485), acquiring those goods they need and want for themselves and their intimate circle.⁶ But there are not enough goods to satisfy the "avidity" of all. There is, in other words, a condition of scarcity (T 487). Now, Hume thinks that man's affection is naturally limited to his intimate circle. People have "no...love of mankind, merely as such" (T 481). "[W]e are naturally very limited in our kindness and affection" (T 519), and when people do "extend their concern beyond themselves, 'tis not to any great distance; nor is it usual for them, in common life, to look farther than their nearest friends and acquaintance" (T 534). This limited benevolence of man, in conjunction with the external condition of scarcity, means that we begin to compete and come into conflict with each other over the scarce external goods we desire so much for ourselves and our intimate circle. Each person's possessions are "expos'd to the violence of others...while at the

same time, there is not a sufficient quantity of them to supply every one's desires and necessities. As the improvement, therefore, of these goods is the chief advantage of [economic] society, so the instability of their possession, along with their scarcity, is the chief impediment [to economic society]" (T 487-88).

How, then, can people overcome the problems caused by instability and scarcity, and acquire the advantages of economic society? Not by changing their nature and either replacing their limited benevolence with extensive benevolence or by eradicating their avidity. Such a thing is impossible: "[People] cannot change their natures" (T 537). Nor by making external goods abundant. This a dream or "idle fiction" (T 494). Instead, people must change their circumstances. How? By instituting rules of private property, rules which will stabilise possession and introduce order. And here we should note that these rules are not contrary to human nature, they are not contrary to man's limited benevolence and natural avidity. Rather, they redirect these qualities, put a bridle on their "heedless and impetuous" exercise, and thus enable humans to better satisfy their nature (T 489; T 526).

So, in Hume's conjectural account of the rise of justice, "'tis only from the selfishness and confined generosity of men, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants, that justice derives its origin" (T 495). Once people have stepped outside their intimate circles and come into contact with strangers, violence erupts as a result of (a) the scarcity of desired external goods (b) man's selfishness and (c) his avidity. At this point people see that they must rectify this bad condition. And they do this, Hume thinks, by turning to the rules of justice. These rules are established by

means of "a convention enter'd into by all members of the society", a convention whose aim it is "to bestow stability on the possession of ...[external] goods, and leave everyone in the peaceable enjoyment of what he may acquire by his fortune and industry" (T 489). This convention arises once each person sees, as a result of reflection and experience, that it is in his interest to leave the possessions of others alone provided that others leave his possessions alone (T 490). In the pre-economic society each person is "sensible" of the value of property rules and that such rules are in his interest (T 498; T 490). Now, after "repeated experience of the inconveniences of transgressing [the rules of property]" (T 490; my emphasis) people begin to reveal both their desire for rules of justice, for such rules are in their own interest, and their readiness to respect the property of others on the condition that others respect theirs: "Every one expresses this sense [of interest] to his fellow, along with the resolution he has taken of squaring his actions by it, on condition that others will do the same" (T 498; T 490). Thus, "gradually", by "slow progression", the trust and confidence among people increases as "this [repeated] experience assures...[them] still more, that the sense of interest has become common to all... [their] fellows, and gives...[them] a confidence of the future regularity of their conduct" (T 490; my emphasis).

As a result of this future assurance, founded on repeated experience, or custom, people, one by one, begin to adhere to the rules of property and "[t]his becomes an example to others" until "justice establishes itself by a kind of convention or agreement" (T 498; T 490). But this convention or agreement is not the result of any promise, "[f]or even promises themselves...arise from human conven-

tions." Rather it develops in the same way that the agreement between rowers develops: "Two men, who pull the oars of a boat, do it by an agreement or convention, tho' they have never given promises to each other" (T 490; E II 306).

Thus the rules of property stabilisation come into effect, not as a result of anything as formal as a promise, but slowly, as a result of each person's seeing that transgressing such rules is not in his own interest, expressing this to others, and then cautiously adhering to such rules as repeated experience show him that he can do so safely, "in expectation that others are to perform the like" (T 498). Repeated experience, that is, custom gives each person this important expectation, important because "'tis only on expectation of this, that...[people's] moderation and abstinence are founded" (T 490).⁷

We have seen that the rules of property stabilisation are not embraced as a result anything as formal as a promise. This means that these rules must be such that they are capable of being adopted without the need for promises or contracts etc. This is why, in part, Hume thinks that the rules of property embraced by people are those of "present possession", "occupation", "prescription", "accession", and "succession" (T 503-13). For these rules are natural to man in the sense that they arise from the natural relations of resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect (T 504 fn. 1; T 509 fn. 2).⁸ They are obvious to people, and, thus, people can agree on them without the need for any formal procedures. This is an important point to which we shall return later in this chapter.

We mentioned earlier that Humean justice involves more than just rules of property stabilisation. It also involves rules for the transference of property by the consent of the owner, and the rule

that promises must be kept. Like the rule for stable property, these rules result from experience of, and reflection upon, the inconveniences (to one's own interest) their absence cause, and a slow and cautious agreement or convention that they should be embraced (T 514-26). And, as in the case of the rule of property stabilisation, underlying these conventions is the necessary expectation of each person that all those around him will abide by the rules of consent and promise, an expectation founded on the repeated experience (custom) of each that all others realise that it is in their interest to abide by these rules and, as a result, behave accordingly (T 521).

Thus justice (and, therefore, society itself) is founded in a significant way on habitually acquired expectations. For Hume, custom plays a central role in the maintenance of justice (and therefore of society). But this is not the only way in which custom supports justice. There is, as we shall see later, a second way.

So far in Hume's conjectural history, the society that has developed has adopted rules of justice, but it has established no government. This, however, soon changes, for, according to Hume, if economic society is to survive, then it must be supported by government. That is, it must be transformed into a "political society" (a term Hume uses often e.g T 530; T 538; T 554; E II 205; Essays 37).

Briefly, while Hume thinks that no society can exist without rules of justice, he does think that there can be society without government (T 541; T 539). However, this is true only when society is in its "infancy" and "the pleasures of life are few, and of little value" (T 539). Here, there is no reason to stray from the path of justice, for what your neighbour has you also have (T 553). Further, in a small, "uncultivated" society, people can still see that it is

in their immediate interest to abide by the rules of justice. In such a society, "this motive [of self-interest]...is sufficiently strong and forcible" to support obedience to the rules of justice without the need for government (T 499). However, "when society has become numerous, and has encreas'd to a tribe or nation, this interest is more remote; nor do men readily perceive, that disorder and confusion follow upon every breach of these rules, as in a more narrow and contracted society" (T 499). Further, as the population grows "there must immediately arise an inequality of property" (Essays 297-98), so that a person will no longer have the same goods as his neighbour. This emerging gap between rich and poor breeds jealousy and conflict. The result of all this is that "in large and polish'd societies" people cannot, "of themselves" observe the rules of justice (T 543). In such societies the advantages to be gained by abiding by the rules of justice (order and stability) become distant, while the advantages gained by violating these rules (the acquisition of others' goods that one does not have) become near and proximate (T 535).

According to Hume, people have a natural inclination to prefer the near to the distant (T 428), and it is in order to remedy this "narrowness of soul" (T 537), this "frailty or perverseness of our nature" (Essays 38), that people establish government. For, in their more reflective and calm, moments, people will "always give the preference to whatever is in itself preferable." They "always...prefer the greater good" (T 536). When people sit back in their "large and polish'd societies" and reflect on their short-sighted behaviour, they see that the advantages which result from abiding by the rules of justice are greater, "more preferable", than those that result from their violation. Thus they see that they must abide by the rules of

justice. However, people have no natural motive to abide by these rules. And their nature cannot be changed (T 537). They will always prefer the near to the remote. The only remedy, they discover, is to "change their situation, and render the observance of justice...[their] immediate interest" (T 537; Essays 38). How do we change our situation? By establishing government, that is by appointing as rulers men whose immediate interest is the enforcement of the rules of justice (T 537; Essays 38).

Thus, in Hume's conjectural account of the origin of government it is the natural and strong human desire for order and stability which gives rise to government. "Order in society, we find, is much better maintained by means of government" (Essays 38-39; Essays 466; Essays 480). The purpose of government is to protect us in our persons and property by strictly enforcing the rules of justice. We can now understand why, for Hume, society, or at least a large commercial society, cannot exist without the rules of allegiance to government.

Now, according to Hume, once political society (that is, economic society supported by government) has been established, people are no longer moved to be just from self-interest, but from a sense of justice (T 500). That is, adherence to justice acquires the status of a moral virtue. In political society the rules of justice are "naturally attended with a strong sentiment of morals" (T 579-80). The question we must investigate is: How does the sense of justice arise? How is justice raised to a moral status?

According to Hume, "a sympathy with public interest is the source of the moral approbation which attends that virtue [i.e justice]" (T 499-500). The rules of justice benefit all people in society. Their violation is harmful. Thus, when these rules are adhered to they cause

pleasure to people, while when they are violated they cause pain. Now, earlier we noted the human quality of sympathetic perception. It is this quality which enables us to escape from our own subjectivity and feel the perceptions of others, even of strangers, approving, as spectators from a general or impartial point of view, of those perceptions which cause them pleasure and disapproving of those which cause them pain. Thus, whenever justice is breached and people who are treated unjustly are pained "[w]e partake of their uneasiness by sympathy; and as every thing, which gives uneasiness in human actions, upon the general survey, is call'd Vice" (T 499). Similarly, when rules of justice have been adhered to and those who benefit feel pleasure, we as observers feel pleasure as a result of sympathy "and whatever produces satisfaction...is denominated Virtue" (T 499). Hume goes on to say that this is "why the sense of moral good and evil follows upon justice and injustice" (T 499).

But now we have a problem. To see this problem we must return to our discussion of sympathy in Chapter 3. There we noted that the associative relation of resemblance lies at the heart of the mechanism of sympathy. If we can sympathise with another person at all, it is because there is a resemblance between him and us. But here it is important to note that the associative relation of resemblance is not enough to fully convey to us (by means of sympathy) the force of another's belief or feeling. For, according to Hume, "[t]he sentiments of others have little influence, when far remov'd from us, and require the relation of contiguity, to make them communicate themselves entirely" (T 318). Ties of blood, "being a species of causation", have the same effect, as does "acquaintance", which is a habitual relation (T 318). Thus, if we are to fully sympathise with another person, then

the fact that there is a resemblance between him and us is not enough. He must also be either spatially or affectionately near us. If sympathy is founded only on resemblance, then it will be weak. For sympathy to be strong and complete it must also be founded on either contiguity or causation (blood-ties) or "acquaintance" (friendship). This indicates that, for Hume, sympathy works best within a limited (either spatial or affectional) range.

Now, elsewhere, Hume tells us that "[w]e sympathize more with...our acquaintance, than with strangers" (T 581), and "the company of strangers is agreeable to us for a short time, by inlivening our thought...[but] the company of our relations and acquaintance must be peculiarly agreeable, because it has this effect in a greater degree, and is of a more durable influence" (T 353). In fact, "the relation of blood produces the strongest tie the mind is capable of in the love of parents to their children, and a lesser degree of the same affection, as the relation lessens" (T 352). In other words, for Hume, there is a hierarchy of sympathetic perception. Sympathy operates best, most powerfully, when it is founded on the relation of causation (blood-ties). And it also operates powerfully when founded on "acquaintance" (friendship), though not as powerfully as it does in the case of blood-ties. The power of sympathy lessens when it is founded on contiguity (this will come out clearer in a moment), and is weakest when it is founded on resemblance alone.

So, Hume thinks that sympathy is at its strongest when it operates within the boundary of our intimate circle of affection (family and friends). Of course, this does not mean that we do not sympathize with strangers. But on the basis of what has been said, it is clear that, for Hume, in the case of strangers, sympathy will work "entirely" only

when these strangers are spatially near us, otherwise their perceptions will have "little influence" (T 318), being founded only on the relation of resemblance. Thus, "sympathy with persons remote from us [is] much fainter than that with persons near and contiguous" (E II 229). But here we should note that sympathising with contiguous strangers has a significantly different result from sympathising with loved ones and friends. For, unlike sympathising with members of our intimate circle, sympathising with strangers does not make me "willing to sacrifice any thing of my own interest, or cross any of my passions, for his satisfaction" (T 586). When we sympathise with a contiguous stranger, we feel his e.g. pain or pleasure and this causes us to disapprove or approve of that thing which causes him pain or pleasure (T 586; T 588-89) and elevate the former to a vice and the latter to a virtue. However, we do not make sacrifices for him. In the case of a contiguous stranger, sympathy does not lead us to actively seek his good, as it does in the case of a loved ones.

It is clear, then, that, for Hume, sympathy operates best within the limits of one's intimate circle. And even when it extends to strangers, these strangers must be contiguous. And here is our problem. For in our brief outline above of Hume's account of how justice becomes a virtue, we noted Hume's talk of "a sympathy with public interest" (T 499-500), thus indicating that, in his view, sympathy can be extended to non-contiguous strangers. Hume thinks that "[s]ympathy interests us in the good of mankind" (T 584), and that "we have no... extensive concern for society but from sympathy; and consequently 'tis that principle, which takes us far out of ourselves, as to give us the same pleasure or uneasiness in the characters of others" (T 579), and the "others" here are not only loved ones and contiguous strangers, but

also non-contiguous strangers. Thus, Hume thinks that we can sympathise with strangers even when they are not contiguous ("the public" or "society"). He calls this type of sympathy "extensive sympathy" (T 586) and it is responsible for the moral status of justice (in a large society). For Hume, then, sympathy can operate, not only in the narrow realm of one's intimate circle and, less powerfully, in the narrow realm of contiguous strangers, but also in the more extensive realm of the public or society. The question we must investigate is how the boundary of sympathy (which is naturally narrow) can be extended to include strangers who are not contiguous, i.e. "the public". How does "extensive sympathy" (and, therefore, the moral status of justice in a large society) arise? The answer, we shall find, is "Custom".

According to Hume, in a large society, "the sense of justice and injustice is not deriv'd from nature, but arises artificially, tho' necessarily from education, and human conventions" (T 483; my emphases). Now, since the sense of justice in a large society depends on "extensive sympathy" it seems that this "extensive sympathy" which causes us to take an interest in the public good and gives us "our sentiments of virtue" (T 586), including justice, is also the result of "education, and human conventions." If this is correct, then we can say that for Hume, while it is true that by nature sympathy is limited, its scope can be extended artificially, by education, and it is because of such education that we can come to sympathise with the public good. Let us investigate this idea.

When Hume asks why people in their "civiliz'd state" (political society) adhere to the rules of justice he points to the sense of justice people have acquired as a result of having been "train'd up according to a certain discipline and education" (T 479). Hume thinks

that "the public instructions of politicians, and the private education of parents, contribute to the giving us a sense of honour and duty in the strict regulation of our actions with regard to the properties of others" (T 533-34). Hume repeats this educative task of politicians and parents a number of times (e.g T 500, T 534). For our purpose now, it is the education provided by politicians which is important.⁹

Now, given that, for Hume, "no principle of the human mind is more natural than a sense of virtue" (T 484; my emphasis), Hume has no patience with the view that "fashion, vogue, custom, and law...[are] the chief foundations of all moral determinations" (E II 333). He refuses to believe that such distinctions are created or invented by politicians (T 500; T 533; T 578; E II 214).¹⁰ However, he is convinced that politicians can play a role, through education, in promoting virtue: "[P]oliticians may assist nature in the producing of those sentiments, which she suggests to us, and may even on some occasions, produce alone an approbation or esteem for any particular action... [P]oliticians can...extend the natural sentiments beyond their original bounds" (T 500; T 521). Those who argue that "all moral distinctions arise from education" are wrong. But they are right when they go on to say that such distinctions can be "encouraged, by the art of politicians, in order to render men tractable, and subdue their natural ferocity and selfishness which incapacitated them for society." Hume goes on to say that this "education" by politicians, "a powerful influence", is able, not only to take "beyond their natural standards, the sentiments of approbation and dislike" but can "even...create, without any natural principle, a new sentiment of this kind" (E II 214). Of course, sympathy is not a sentiment, but a natural principle of the imagination (T 557; T 618). But given that education can extend

the "sentiments of approbation or dislike", and given, as we have seen, that it is by means of these sentiments (through sympathy) that we approve of justice and disapprove of injustice, it follows that education can also extend the scope of the principle of sympathy.¹¹

Thus, the politician can improve on what nature has provided, including, it seems, the principle of sympathy. In other words, the politician, working with nature's raw materials, can, by means of education, inculcate the virtue of justice in his subjects by extending the scope of their sympathy to include the public interest and thereby help to transform them into beings fit for life in a political society. Thus, we can say that, according to Hume, education is one of the state's primary tasks.¹² But what tools of education will the politician use to achieve his aim of extending sympathy and instilling the virtue of justice? According to Hume,

that general virtue and good morals in a state, which are so requisite to happiness, can never arise from the most refined precepts of philosophy, or even the severest injunctions of religion; but must proceed entirely from the virtuous education of youth, the effect of wise laws and institutions (Essays 55).¹³

Thus, the educative tools of the politician are wise laws and wise institutions. Now, as we have seen, for Hume, education is founded on "custom and repetition" (T 116). Thus, it is by repeatedly exposing their subjects to "wise laws and institutions" that the politicians will achieve their task of promoting virtue. "Habit", Hume declares, is...[a] powerful means of reforming the mind, and implanting in it good dispositions and inclinations" (Essays 170-71).¹⁴ The habits acquired as a result of repeated exposure to "wise laws and institu-

tions" have the effect of extending the naturally narrow boundaries of sympathy and furnishing people with the good disposition and inclination of sympathising with the public good.

We should emphasise the importance of the politician's task here. We know that, according to Hume, people naturally have their intimate circle as the most powerful object of their concern and affection. They have little or no natural affection for strangers. This fact about humans, Hume thinks, is "directly destructive of society" (T 492), for people are prepared to harm those outside their intimate circle in order to benefit those lying within it. "[I]nstead of fitting men for large societies, [limited natural affection] is almost as contrary to them, as the most narrow selfishness" (T 487). The politician's task is to regulate this fact about humans. He does not seek to do this by extirpating man's natural affection for his loved ones. Such a thing would be not only impracticable (given that human nature can never be changed), but also harmful. As we noted in Chapter 1, Hume thinks that "[s]overeigns must take mankind as they find them" in the sense that they must respect human nature, and any "improvements" they introduce into society must "comply with the common bent of mankind." Reformers must never violate human nature, for this is "violent" or harmful. Rather they must "give it all the improvements of which it is susceptible" (Essays 260). And this is exactly what the politician here is doing. He is improving on what nature has provided. By means of education (repeated exposure to good laws and institutions) he expands the boundaries of natural sympathy, thus inculcating in people the "extensive sympathy" they must have in order to be able to extend their sentiments of approval and disapproval, raise justice to the level of a virtue, and live together in an economic society. And

we should note that this task of the politician is an on going one. For people by nature love their intimate circle more than their extensive or wider one and, thus, there is always the fear that people will slide back into their natural limited concerns (T 582). To prevent this, politicians must never abandon their educative role. They must never cease to inculcate in their subjects those habits which ultimately lead to the elevation of justice to a virtue.

Parental education also assists in the installation of justice as a virtue. Parents,

are induc'd to inculcate on their children, from their earliest infancy, the principles of probity, and teach them to regard the observance of those rules, by which society is maintain'd, as worthy and honourable, and their violation as base and infamous. By this means, sentiments of honour may take root in their tender minds, and acquire such firmness and solidity, that they may fall little short of those principles (T 500-501).

In the previous chapter we saw that, according to Hume, people adhere to virtue because of their strong desire for reputation. We now discover that another reason for this adherence is the education they receive by politicians and parents: "As publick praise and blame encrease our esteem for justice; so private education [the education of children by parents] and instruction [the education of the public by politicians] contribute to the same effect" (T 500). Thus, education plays a fundamental role in the establishment and maintenance of justice in political society. But, as we have already noted, for Hume, education is founded on "custom and repetition" (T 116). Thus, we

discover another major way in which, for Hume, custom supports justice and, therefore, keeps society together. Custom plays the same role in the area of allegiance.

According to Hume, once government has been established, "the separate interest, which we have in submission" produces "a separate sentiment of morality" (T 554). In other words, in political society allegiance acquires a moral status. How? Given the significant role that government plays with respect to justice, we find actions which are designed to harm government (such as "seditious and disloyal actions") as "highly prejudicial to public interest" (T 545). As a result of extensive sympathetic perception, any anti-governmental action "naturally gives us an uneasiness...and makes us attach to them the idea of vice and moral deformity" (T 545). Thus, obedience to government, that is, allegiance, acquires a moral status the same way that adherence to the rules of justice does. And, the extensive sympathy which ultimately founds of the duty of allegiance is (again as in the case of justice) caused by "[e]ducation, and the artifices of politicians" (T 546). It is this education that places a "morality on loyalty" and makes people see "all rebellion with a greater degree of guilt and infamy" (T 546). Thus, like the virtue of justice, the virtue of allegiance is supported by education, or custom. (And, again like justice, allegiance is also supported, as we saw in previous chapter, by the desire for a good reputation, though, ultimately, all virtue, Hume thinks, springs from man's nature.)

Once government is established it is, as we have already noted, "sanctified by time" (HGB 225 fn. 4), so that once people have been repeatedly exposed to the rule of that government, they, being the habitual creatures that they are, form the habitual belief that this

government has the right to rule. Once people "learn, that they themselves and their ancestors have, for several ages, or from time immemorial, been subject to such a form of government or such a family; they immediately acquiesce, and acknowledge their obligation to allegiance" (Essays 470) (though, as we saw in the previous chapter, Hume is overstating his case here. He knows that people do in fact abandon well-established governments which are sanctified by time). This indicates that in Hume's view, the strongest rule of allegiance for people is what he calls "long possession" (T 556). But given that "[a]ll human institutions, and none more than government, are in continual fluctuation" (Essays 494-95), that is, given that rulers are toppled and governments vanish, it follows that people cannot always appeal to long possession as their rule of allegiance. In this case they appeal to one of the other rules, namely, "present possession" (T 557), or "conquest" (T 558), or "succession" (T 559), or "positive laws" (T 561). Like the rules for the distribution of property, these rules for the distribution of authority are founded on the natural workings of the mind.¹⁵

III

So far in this chapter we have seen that, for Hume, human well-being depends upon economic society, and that such society depends upon the rules of justice. Now, while justice is founded upon sentiments natural to man, to gain hold and flourish as a virtue in a "large and polish'd" economic society, it requires (a) the expectation of each member of society that those around him will adhere to the rules of justice in the future, an expectation founded on habit, (b) the educa-

tion of the people by their parents and politicians, an education which is also founded on custom, (c) the desire for a good reputation (something we also saw in the previous chapter), and (d), government. "[N]umerous and civiliz'd societies cannot subsist without government" (T 553-54), for in such societies people, "of themselves", cannot abide by the rules of justice. Government is needed in order to enforce justice, without which there can be no large economic society. Government itself is founded on the moral duty of allegiance which, like the duty of justice, depends on custom and (as we saw in the previous chapter) the desire for a good reputation.

If all this is correct, then it is clear that, in a number of important ways, habit keeps Humean society together. Without certain habitual patterns of thought and behaviour human well-being must suffer, for without such patterns there can be no justice, no allegiance, no government and, therefore, no large economic society. This presents us with two serious problems.

A.

Habitual adherence to the rules of justice plays a central role in holding Humean society together. Thus, as we noted in the "Introduction", scholars have claimed that, for Hume, any innovations introduced into society must be conservative. Is this correct? Does what Hume has to say about justice restrict him to conservative reformism? No.

To see this we must recall (and keep in mind) that Hume presents us with the rules of justice after he has examined the interaction between the immutable principles of human nature and the external world. Now, as we have already noted, Hume labels justice an "artificial virtue"

for "the sense of justice and injustice is not deriv'd from nature, but arises artificially, tho' necessarily from education, and human conventions" (T 483). However, "[t]o avoid giving offence", Hume warns that,

when I deny justice to be a natural virtue, I make use of the word, natural, only as opposed to artificial. In another sense of the word; as no principle of the human mind is more natural than a sense of virtue; so no virtue is more natural than justice. Mankind is an inventive species; and where an invention is obvious and absolutely necessary, it may as properly be said to be natural as anything that proceeds immediately from original principles, without the intervention of thought or reflection (T 484)

Thus, in an important sense, justice is natural, namely, in the sense that it is "obvious and absolutely necessary" to man. It obviously and necessarily arises among humans given their nature and the external conditions they must face. It is "inseparable" from the human species (T 474; T 526; E II 307). This is why Hume calls the rules of justice "Laws of Nature", for they are "common to" and "inseparable from" the human species" (T 484). After realising that they must live together, but seeing that this is not possible without the existence of certain rules, humans obviously and necessarily (naturally) adopt as their rules the rules of justice that Hume himself uncovers in the Treatise. And this point came out in the above discussion. Thus, justice (as presented to us by Hume) "extends to all times and places...It is obvious, and discovers itself on the first formation of society. All these causes render the rules of justice steadfast and immutable; at least as immutable as human nature" (T 620).

Now, all this should make it clear that in putting forward the rules of justice Hume does not see himself as inventing something new. Hume the anatomist subjects man to empirical scientific scrutiny and discovers that when men come to see that they need rules in order to live together, the rules that in fact spring to their minds are those that he himself uncovers. For these are the rules that nature has provided. Men everywhere, in all societies, when they think of the rules of justice, think of the rules that Hume has presented us with. Thus, defending himself in A Letter from a Gentleman against those who attacked him for classifying justice as an artificial virtue, Hume declares: "Has he not expressly asserted, That Justice...is so natural to Man, that no Society of Men, and even no individual Member of any Society, was ever entirely devoid of all Sense of it?" (IG 31; my emphasis).

The rules of justice (Hume is convinced) are a description of principles that everyone already knows and recognises. They have always been, and always will be, in the minds of men. How could they not, given that they naturally and necessarily arise from immutable human nature? But this is not all. Hume is also convinced that the natural rules of justice are part of every society. They are universal and exist in every society: "The convenience, or rather necessity, which leads to justice is so universal, and everywhere points so much to the same rules, that the habit takes place in all societies" (E II 203). Hume's view about the universality of justice, should not surprise us. For we already know Hume's view that there can be no society without the rules of justice, that is, the natural rules of justice that he has uncovered for us. Thus, where there is a society we must find there the natural rules of justice, the Laws of Nature. But this

does not mean that, according to Hume, in every society these rules are respected and perfectly realised. As mentioned, the rules of justice are rules for the promotion of commerce, and as we shall see in the next chapter, Hume does not think that every form of government is favourable to commerce, that is, not every form of government allows the natural rules of justice, the laws of nature, to find full expression. In fact, as we saw in Chapter 2, Hume thinks that the only form of government which ensures a flourishing commercial sector, that is, which ensure the flourishing of the natural rules of justice, is free government (Essays 92) (though Hume thinks that this was not true of the ancient badly-contrived republics). Hume knows that the world is full of sovereigns who are "transported by their passions into all the excesses of cruelty and ambition" (T 552), and devise all sorts of pernicious systems of justice for their political societies. But even in such societies the natural rules of justice are lurking somewhere. They must be, for we are still dealing with a society and, therefore, with a body which incorporates the natural rules of justice, though these are hindered to an enormous degree. If this is correct, then it seems that, for Hume, the natural rules of justice are the "basic principles" of society (as Stewart calls them),¹⁶ in the sense that no society can exist without them, even if in that society they are not fully realised and are prevented from running their natural course.

According to Hume, the natural rules of justice exist in every society, even in a society ruled by a despotic form of government where, as we shall see in the next chapter, property is highly unstable and commerce is impossible. But even such a society has as its pillars, its "basic principles", the rules of justice which are provided by wise nature, though they are not allowed to flourish and exist in an un-

stable or hindered form. And Hume must think that the inhabitants of such a pernicious political society are aware of these natural rules. For, as we have just seen, he thinks that these rules are "obvious" and "necessary" so that no man "was ever entirely devoid of all Sense of it". Thus, for Hume, those governed by imperfect rules of justice are aware that something is wrong with their political society. They are aware that the rules of justice that nature has provided are not being observed. They are aware that the rules of justice which spring from immutable human nature and which every society has as its central pillars (for otherwise it could not be a society) are not being allowed to run their natural course, as they ought to be, and as Hume thinks they ought to be.

Now, we have been told that Hume is restricted to being a conservative reformer because, for him, society is supported by justice, which in turn is supported by habits, and these habits must not be upset. To avoid upsetting them, only conservative reforms must be introduced into society. But why shouldn't we upset the habits of justice when the system of justice they support deviates from the one provided for us by nature? Why shouldn't we introduce into a society whose existing system of justice (and, therefore, the habits supporting this system) is not consistent with the "laws of nature", progressive reforms designed to allow these laws to flourish unhindered? Would allowing the laws of nature to flourish in a society where they have so far been hindered or deformed bring down that society? No. For we are not uprooting the "basic principles" of society, but allowing them to be fully realised. True, such a task would involve uprooting old habits of justice and introducing into society new habits to support the new, natural system of justice. But this task will not plunge us into the

state of nature. For, as we know, the new system of justice to be introduced is "natural to Man". No human has ever being, or ever will be, "entirely devoid of all Sense of it." Thus, the introduction of this new and natural system of justice (and the new habits supporting it) will be easy, in the sense that it will not traumatise the public. For, not only is the public already aware of this system, but it has a natural predilection towards it. And this latter point is important. For Hume thinks that "the less natural any set of principle are, which support a particular society, the more difficulty will a legislator meet with in raising and cultivating them" (Essays 260). But the rules of justice as uncovered by Hume are natural, and thus, it will not be difficult to get the public to embrace them and the habits upon which they is founded. And, no doubt, the politicians we met earlier in this chapter, those politicians whose task it is to improve on what nature has provided and inculcate "extensive sympathy" in the minds of the people, will assist the public in forming the new habits of justice by means of wise laws and institutions.

For Hume, justice (as he has uncovered it) supports society, and habits support justice. But there is no reason why Hume would not allow the introduction of non-conservative reforms into an unjust society whose aim was to replace an existing pernicious system of justice (and the habits underlying it) with that system of justice (and the necessary habits) which has been ordained by nature. Such non-conservative reforms would not dissolve society. How could they given that they seek the full realisation of the very things that keep society together, the Laws of Nature, Laws which are "natural to Man".

Of course, for us, the important question is whether all this is consistent with taking "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously. We

shall deal with this question in the next chapter. Here, our aim has been only to deal with the separate question of whether what Hume has to say about justice restricts him to conservative reformism. The answer is, No. Hume's theory of justice is consistent with his being a conservative/radical reformer.

Keeping in mind what we have said so far, we can now turn our attention to a second problem.

B.

In the previous chapter we dealt with the problem of how the Humean individual could in fact withdraw his loyalty from an existing government and transfer it to a new one given that (a) he is a habitual creature and "once accustomed to obedience, never thinks[s] of departing from the path, in which...[he] and...[his] ancestors have constantly trod" (Essays 39), and (b) he has a great concern for his reputation, and the thing which contributes most to his good name is adherence to the standards of morality including, of course, the duty of allegiance. But we saw that, in the case of (a) the Humean individual does in fact depart from the political path he has inherited from his ancestors and, in the case of (b) that the Humean individual's reputation is not founded on allegiance to the existing government as such, but to the existing government when it serves the public good. Both (a) and (b) are important conclusions for us. For the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will require the public to change its object of allegiance. Given that Hume thinks that the public is capable of making such a change it follows that one cannot argue that we cannot take "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously on

the ground that Humean individual is incapable of transferring his allegiance.

But now a further problem arises for us in this area. As we have seen, Hume thinks that in "large and polish'd societies" government is necessary in order to uphold the rules of justice, without which society would be plunged into the state of nature. For Hume, government, and therefore the duty of allegiance and the habits supporting it, is absolutely essential if humans are to live together in large societies. In view of this position it seems that, for Hume, people ought never to transfer their allegiance from one government to another for such a thing would disturb their habits of allegiance, thus interfering with the enforcement of justice by government and thus plunging society into the state of nature. The Humean individual might be capable of transferring his allegiance, but it seems that, according to Hume, he ought never to do such a thing. If this is Hume's view, that is, if Hume thinks that we ought never to change the object of our allegiance for fear of disturbing the habits which support this allegiance, then how can he be a non-conservative reformer? In which case we cannot take seriously the idea that he wishes to bring the Perfect Commonwealth into being in Britain. For the progressive reform of introducing the Perfect Commonwealth into the nation will require people to change their object (and therefore their habits) of allegiance. Our problem, then, is whether or not Hume thinks that people ought to change their object of allegiance.

We saw above that there is no reason why Hume would be opposed to the uprooting of a society's pernicious system of justice in order to allow that system provided for us by wise nature to flourish. Given this, and given (as we already know) that, for Hume, the task of government

is to enforce justice, why can't we say that Hume would allow the public to overthrow a pernicious government (i.e a government which enforces a harmful system of justice) and replace it with one which will ensure the blossoming of the natural rules of justice? And, as we shall see now, there is room for such a position in Hume's thought.

When Hume comes to discuss the normative standard for the distribution of political power, he tells us that "the strongest title to sovereignty", the title which "is justly regarded as sacred and inviolable" is "the concurrence" of the five rules of allegiance which we noted earlier and which he has derived from human nature (T 562). But Hume makes it very clear that this title is subordinate to public utility. The sovereign in whom these rules concur has a "sacred and inviolable" title only "[w]here the public good does not evidently demand a change" (T 562). Thus, just as people (in Hume's view) do in fact make the public good their normative standard for determining whether or not to support a government, Hume too makes the public good his normative standard of political legitimacy. In all areas of everyday life, Hume was prepared to side with the common-sense views of the people (e.g T 272; T 552; E I 161; E II 170; E II 194). And what does common sense tell us in the area of allegiance?

[C]ommon sense teaches us, that, as government binds us to obedience only on account of its tendency to public utility, that duty must always, in extraordinary cases, when public ruin would evidently attend obedience, yield to the primary and original obligation. Salus populi suprema Lex, the safety of the people is the supreme law (Essays 489).

Hume repeats the same basic argument in the Treatise. He asks whether

people have a "moral obligation...to submit to a tyrannical government against their own and the public interest" (T 551). His answer is "No". For government is established by people in order "to procure themselves some security against the wickedness and injustice of men, who are perpetually carried, by their unruly passions, and by their present and immediate interest, to the violation of all the laws of society" (T 551). Thus, if rulers are ever "transported by their passions into all the excesses of cruelty and ambition" and no longer satisfy our interests, then "we may resist the more violent effects of supreme power, without any crime or injustice" (T 552). Hume concludes by asking, What principle of human nature causes humans to submit to government? Custom? No. True, as we have seen, people do obey government from habit, but this is only once government has been established. But, "what motive first produces those instances of submission, which we imitate, and that train of actions, which produces the custom?" His answer is "interest" (T 553). Interest gives rise to the habit of submission. Where this interest ceases, so does the habit. Interest is the principle of human nature which produces government, allegiance, and the habits underlying allegiance, and it is this principle which Hume makes the normative standard of allegiance. Thus,

if interest first produces obedience to government, the obligation to obedience must cease, whenever the interest ceases, in any great degree, and in a considerable number of instances (T 553).¹⁷

Hume does not have much to say about self-preservation. But what he does say is important for us. According to Hume, self-preservation, "the love of life", is one of the "instincts originally implanted in

our natures" (T 417). It is one of man's "stronger motives" (E II 186) and "'tis not ignorantly nor causally we perform those actions, which tend to self-preservation" (T 176). But not only is self-preservation an instinct. It is also a right, a right which springs from the "necessity of self-preservation" and which is intimately linked to our "right of resistance":

[I]n limited monarchies, 'tis certain, that people still retain the right of resistance; since 'tis impossible, even in the most despotic governments, to deprive them of it. The same necessity of self-preservation, and the same motive of public good, give them the same liberty in the one case as in the other (T 563-64).

Thus, "[t]he right of self-preservation is unalienable in every individual, much more in every community" (Essays 362).¹⁸ No individual can ever be deprived of the right of resistance. Nor can any community. Thus, where a community sees that its preservation, its interest or good, is being threatened by its government, it has the right to dispose of that government.

It is clear, then, that Hume does allow people to change their object of allegiance. This does not mean that Hume allows people to overthrow their existing government whenever they might feel that it is not serving their interest. In the long quote above from Essays 489 Hume tells us that rebellion is justified only "in extraordinary cases". And at T 553 (quoted above) he tells us that we have a right to rebel when government violates our interest "in any great degree, and in a considerable number of instances." Elsewhere he talks of "[r]esistance ...being admitted [only] in extraordinary emergencies" and adds that "I

must confess, that I shall always incline to their side, who draw the bond of allegiance very close, and consider an infringement of it, as a last refuge in desperate cases, when the public is in the highest danger, from violence and tyranny" (Essays 490). Hume never tells us what an extraordinary emergency is, what a desperate case is, what type of governmental violence endangers the public etc. But this is consistent with the outrage he expresses against those "preposterous" people, namely, "preacher[s] or casuist[s]", who spend all their time "stating all the cases, in which resistance may be allowed" (Essays 490-91). Such an activity is dangerous for it does nothing but encourage people to rebel. But people ought not to be encouraged in this way. Not because there is something sacred about established governments, but because (a) rebellion is almost always followed by civil war, anarchy, and violence (Essays 490; T 553) and (b) people who are encouraged to rebel acquire "a disposition to rebellion" which in turn "forces...[governments] into many violent measures which they never would have embraced" (Essays 490). That is, a rebellious population causes rulers to adopt harsh, despotic methods.

Hume agrees that "obedience is our duty" but adds that this is so only "in the common course of life" (Essays 490). In the "uncommon" course, where it is clear that the established government has no interest to serve the public good, rebellion is justified. But here, the purpose of the rebellion should not merely be to overthrow the existing harmful government, but also institute a better government, one which has as its aim the promotion of the public interest.

Now, clearly, the removal of a government which violates the natural rules of justice, and its replacement with one that respects these rules, would be in the public interest and, therefore, would be con-

done by Hume. For, "the equal distribution of justice, and free enjoyment of property...[are] the great objects for which political society was at first founded by men, which the people have a perpetual and inalienable right to recal, and which no time, nor precedent, nor statute, nor positive institution, ought to deter them from keeping ever uppermost in their thoughts and attention" (H 1 445).¹⁹ It seems, then, that Hume would approve of the removal of a government which did not respect the "great objects" of political society i.e "the equal distribution of justice, and free enjoyment of property". And such a thing can be achieved without having to worry about upsetting the existing habits of allegiance and, thereby, throwing society into the state of nature. For the habits of allegiance to an existing pernicious government are weak, if not non-existent. We have already noted Hume's view that allegiance to government is (and ought to be) determined by interest. Now, according to Hume "though men be much governed by interest; yet interest itself, and all human affairs, are entirely governed by opinion" (Essays 51). Given this we can say that where opinion about a government is low, because the people believe that government does not have its (i.e the people's) interests in mind, allegiance to that government will also be low, since allegiance itself is based upon interest. It is opinion about interest which produces habits of allegiance. Thus, when opinion about interest changes, the habits vanish. And, as we already know, Hume thinks that people in fact use the standard of public utility in determining their allegiance to an existing government. Thus, where the existing government does not serve the public good, the habits of obedience to this government will have deteriorated, due to unfavourable opinion. All this, no doubt, will make the establishment of a new salutary government easier.

And the new opinions and habits of allegiance necessary to support this new government will be easily formed. For the new government will have as its aim the public good, the realisation of those natural rules of justice which the people are already aware of and naturally approve of. Thus, the people will give this new government their full support without much effort, and, due to favourable opinion, they will easily form the new habits of allegiance necessary to support this government. And the good education provided by the politicians will facilitate the formation of these new habits.

Further, we should note that resistance does not undermine what we might call "the principle of subordination". According to Hume "[a]ll men are sensible of the necessity of justice to maintain peace and order; and all men are sensible of the necessity of peace and order for the maintenance of society" (Essays 38). In other words, people know that without justice there can be no society. And, on the basis of our discussion in this chapter we can say that they also know (from repeated experience) that without government there can be no justice. Thus, in overthrowing an existing government, people will know that they must quickly institute a new one. Rebellion will cause people to change their object of allegiance and to abandon their habits of allegiance to the existing government (habits which, as we noted above, will be weak given that this government does not serve the public interest). But it will not cause them to abandon their habitual belief that government is essential to the continued existence of society (where the society is "large and polish'd"). If this is correct, then it seems that, for Hume, resistance (if conducted properly and only when necessary) will not plunge society into the state of nature. For while resistance will cause the extirpation of existing (weak) habits

of allegiance to a bad government, it will not cause the extirpation of the habitual belief that subordination to government is necessary.

In the previous chapter we saw that, for Hume, people do in fact change their objects of allegiance. We now discover that he also thinks that there are times when people ought to change this object and, importantly, that this can be done without destroying society. Whether all this is consistent with taking "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously is something which we shall tackle in Chapter 8. What is important here is the separate question of whether Hume's discussion of allegiance restricts him to conservative reformism. And the answer is, No. If this is correct, then in this chapter we have established that there is nothing in what Hume has to say about either justice or allegiance (and the role that custom plays in supporting these virtues) which prevents us from labelling Hume a "conservative/radical reformer". And this is an important conclusion for us.

CHAPTER 6

Hume is a reformer and his writings have as their aim the instruction of the public. He attacks a wide variety of well-established beliefs that exist in the public realm, and does not hesitate to recommend reforms which take the public well beyond what it knows. He never recommends reforms that will completely remove society's institutions, beliefs, and practices, and the principles that support them. But, as we saw a number of times in Chapter 2, he does recommend reforms that will alter these elements in significant ways. And importantly, neither the method of reasoning that he normatively recommends, nor his conception of man, nor his views about justice and allegiance and the part habit plays in supporting these virtues, prevent him from putting forward such reforms. These elements of Hume's philosophy do not restrict him to conservative reformism. If all this is correct, then we can say that Hume is a conservative/radical reformer. But this is not enough for our purpose. Our purpose is to show that Hume wrote "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" so that the form of government it outlines might one day be established in Britain. Thus, as I explained in the "Introduction", we must show, not only that Hume is a conservative/radical reformer, but also that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" itself is a conservative/radical reform for Britain. For if we can only show that Hume is a conservative/radical reformer, but cannot overturn the view that the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will require massive and wholesale reformation of that nation's economic, social, and political systems, then we can do nothing else but join the ranks of those who have argued that Hume never meant "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" to be taken seriously. If we cannot show that there is harmony between the type of reformism that Hume embraces and the type of reform that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is, then

we are in trouble. Thus, our task in this Chapter will be to show that there is such harmony, and that, for Hume, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is, in the case of Britain, a conservative/radical reform.

But this will not be our only task. We have already noted that, (a) for Hume, reforms must not be "violent" in the sense that they must not violate the common course of nature (Essays 260), and (b) Hume condemns plans of government which are designed by men in their "closet[s]" (Essays 52) i.e plans of government which are the result of abstract theorising. Thus, if we are to show that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" ought to be taken seriously, then we must show, not only that the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will be a conservative/radical reform, but also that his plan of government is not a "violent" reform (in the above sense), and that it is not the result of abstract theorising. Thus, we have three tasks in this chapter.

Our first will be to show that, in the case of Britain, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is not a radical reform, but a conservative/radical one. We shall do this by showing that Hume's Britain and Hume's Perfect Commonwealth are close economically, socially, and politically, so that, while the introduction of Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will bring with it novelties and innovations, it will not completely uproot that nation's economic, social, and political principles (and the beliefs, practices, and institutions they support).

Now, as we have already mentioned, for Hume, limited monarchies and republics are both forms of "free government". Thus, the first step in our first task must be to investigate what Hume has to say about these two types of free government. This investigation is best pursued in the wider context of Hume's views about the strengths and weaknesses of

the various forms of government. Here I should warn the reader that I shall discuss these views in some detail. While this detailed discussion is not important for our purpose in the present chapter, it will be of great importance in the next. However, since, as I said, the task we are presently pursuing is best dealt with in the wider context of Hume's discussion of the various forms of government, rather than having to return to this topic in the next chapter, it is best for us, I think, to deal with it in detail now.¹

I

While discussing Hume's defence of luxury against the "severe moralists" in Chapter 2 we noted his clear preferences for a government of laws and for a luxurious commercial society. A state which embodies the rule of law and which fosters a society with flourishing manufacturing and commercial sectors best meets the needs of the people and the ends of political society. Now, we also noted in that chapter Hume's view that, in a polity, economic, social, and political elements are intimately intertwined as causes and effects. What is important for us here is the view that political causes have social and economic consequences. Thus, as we already know, with free government come: The establishment of the middle rank as society's independent magistracy, flourishing commerce and manufacturing, the production of luxuries, the incentive to work, increased wealth, improvements in technology and agriculture, etc. This idea that political causes have social and economic effects is important and should be kept in mind as this chapter progresses.

According to Hume, the form of government which can never have the

social and economic consequence that he finds desirable is absolute "barbarous" monarchy (e.g the Ottoman empire). This form of government is a despotism, a government of man, not of law, where the ruler wields "arbitrary power" (Essays 116), and where "he delegates his full [absolute and arbitrary] power to all inferior magistrates" he appoints (Essays 117). Given that rulers and their officials govern in an arbitrary manner, absolute "barbarous" monarchies are "oppressive and debasing" (Essays 116), turning subjects into "slaves in the full and proper sense of the word" (Essays 117). Subjects are at the mercy of the whims of their ruler and his officials, and thus lack the "security" that comes with a government of laws (Essays 117), security which is necessary for the economic and the social/cultural improvement of mankind (Essays 124). And here we should note that what also contributes to the slavery and insecurity of the people in "barbarous" monarchies is the fact that in this form of government all rank depends upon the "commission" of the ruler alone (Essays 22). In other words, "barbarous" monarchies lack an independent magistracy to lead the people and protect them from the king.

Thus, of all forms of government, a "barbarous" monarchy least meets the ends of political society. It fails to protect the people and is opposed to stability and the rule of law and, thus, to the growth of commerce and the benefits that flow from such growth. It is the worst of all forms of government (though it is to be preferred to the state of nature (Essays 277)), and Hume warns the British public that if it is not careful Britain might be left with a despotic and barbarous regime (Essays 499-500).

Not all absolute monarchies are "barbarous". Some, Hume thinks, are "civilized", and, according to him, most of the monarchies of western

Europe are of this type (Essays 402). Hume was very much impressed with this form of government. He condemns those who "in a high political rant" disparagingly label such a government as "Tyranny" (Essays 125), and wrote to the Abbé le Blanc: "I abhor, that low practice, so prevalent in England, of speaking with Malignity of France" (L I 194), France being "the most perfect model of pure monarchy" (Essays 95). The reason why Hume has little patience with those who blindly attack absolute "civilized" monarchy is because this form of government "afford[s] tolerable security to the people, and may answer most of the ends of political society" (Essays 125). Security is possible in an absolute "civilized" monarchy because, unlike a "barbarous" one, it embodies the rule of law: "It may now be affirmed of civilized monarchies, what was formerly said in praise of republics alone, that they are a government of Laws, not of Men" (Essays 94).

In Chapter 2 we saw that Hume associates the rise of the rule of law in a state with the rise of "tradesmen and merchants" or the "middling rank". The desire of this group for security of property and freedom from the arbitrary rule of monarchs and aristocrats leads them to "covet equal laws" (Essays 277-78). In view of this link between the rule of law and the rise of the middle class, it might be thought that since absolute "civilized" monarchies embody the rule of law, they also have a middle rank and, thus, strong trading and manufacturing sectors. But this is not so, and we shall see why in a moment. How, then, do absolute "civilized" monarchies come to have the rule of law? Hume's answer is: "Emulation".

Hume thinks that the first governments to arise in the world were "barbarous" monarchies (Essays 115). Now, large states tend towards absolutism, while smaller ones turn towards republicanism (Essays 119;

Essays 527). Thus, the world soon became populated by large absolute "barbarous" monarchies and small ancient republics (or "barbarous" republics as Hume sometimes calls them (Essays 118)). The direction a state took in the early ages of the world depended upon its size.

These small "barbarous" republics were the worlds first free governments, distributing power among several bodies and embracing the principle of the rule of law. In these states "frequent elections by the people...[placed] a considerable check upon authority", and rulers were also restrained by "general laws and statutes" (Essays 117), for "a republic necessarily, by an infallible operation, gives rise to LAW" (Essays 118). Now, Hume thinks that the rise of the rule of law was possible only in the small "barbarous" republics, never in the large "barbarous" monarchies, for "[m]onarchy, when absolute, contains even something repugnant to law" (Essays 118). Absolute "barbarous" monarchy, by its very nature, discourages the invention of law, for "such a form of government...knows no other secret or policy, than that of entrusting unlimited powers to every governor or magistrate, and subdividing the people into many classes and orders of slavery" (Essays 124; Essays 125).

Given that the ancient republics were governments of law, they were able "to secure the lives and properties of the citizens, to exempt one man from the domination of another; and to protect every one against the violence or tyranny of his fellow-citizens" (Essays 118). This meant that all sorts of improvements were possible in these free states, improvements in the arts, sciences, and knowledge. For, "[f]rom law arises security: From security curiosity: And from curiosity knowledge" (Essays 118). Thus, Hume calls the ancient republics "the only proper nursery for the arts and sciences" (Essays

119). This growth in the areas of knowledge and the arts led to greater humanity among the inhabitants (both rulers and subjects) of these republics, given, as mentioned earlier, that knowledge and the liberal arts lead to an "encrease of humanity" (Essays 271; Essays 170). The humanity of rulers was increased, not only as a result of progress in the arts and sciences, but also as a result of the discovery of "the arts of government". According to Hume, it was in the ancient republics that "the arts of government...[were] first invented" (Essays 125). It was in these republics "that knowledge, which is requisite to instruct...[rulers] in the advantages, arising from a better police, and more moderate authority" first emerged, for such knowledge, like all other knowledge, can only arise as a result of the security that comes with the rule of law (Essays 118). We noted in Chapter 2 that, according to Hume, subjects rebel because of the harshness of their rulers and that once sovereigns have acquired knowledge in the "arts of government" they learn "the advantages of humane maxims above rigour and severity" and begin to rule with "mildness and moderation." The result of such rule is greater stability and order among the ruled (Essays 273-74).

Seeing these advantages of the rule of law, Hume thinks that absolute "barbarous" monarchs transformed their states into governments of law. As a result of the power of "the emulation, which naturally arises among...neighbouring states" and which is "an obvious source of improvement" (Essays 119), absolute "barbarous" monarchies lifted themselves out of the misery of despotism and became absolute "civilized" monarchies. Thus, every "civilized" monarchy "owes all its perfection to the republican...It must borrow its laws, and methods, and institutions, and consequently its stability and order, from free governments.

These advantages are the sole growth of republics" (Essays 125).

Here, a further characteristic of "civilized" monarchies ought to be noted. According to Hume, this form of government discourages the growth of factions, for a monarch is "exempt from private jealousies or interests" and, thus, he need not pander to any group for support (Essays 125). However, we should note, that this does not mean that factions never develop in absolute "civilized" monarchies. Hume makes it clear that "absolute governments...[are] not wholly free from them [i.e factions]" (Essays 55). How could they be given that factions arise naturally among humans (Essays 55). However, in absolute "civilized" monarchies, the "soil" is not "the richest" to nourish such "plants" (Essays 55). All forms of government, Hume thinks, give rise to factions, from republics (where they grow best (Essays 55)) to barbarous despotisms (where they are suppressed and, therefore are "more real and more pernicious" (Essays 59-60)). But in "civilized" monarchies factionalism is less severe. Given Hume's ardent opposition to factions (noted in Chapter 2), this characteristic of absolute "civilized" monarchies is something in its favour.

The fact that absolute "civilized" monarchies embody the rule of law means that such monarchies enjoy great benefits: "Property is there secure; industry encouraged; the arts flourish; and the prince lives secure among his subjects, like a father among his children" (Essays 94). As a result of its "laws, and methods, and institutions", (all of which are borrowed from republics) this form of government provides society with "stability and order" (Essays 125).

From what has been said, it would seem that absolute "civilized" monarchies foster the growth of a large and strong commercial society. For they provide people with the necessary order and stability they

need to safely acquire private property and thus to expand the nation's commercial and manufacturing sectors. However, absolute "civilized" monarchies do not have this result, and this is one of the weaknesses of this form of government.

Given the rule of law, property is secure in a "civilized" monarchy. In fact, "[p]rivate property seems to me almost as secure in a civilized EUROPEAN monarchy, as in a republic" (Essays 92-93; Essays 125). But security is not enough for commerce to flourish. What is also needed is the appropriate system of ranking, a system which promises rank on the basis of those qualities which encourage people to seek advancement in the areas of commerce and manufacturing. Free governments have such a system. Here, as we noted in Chapter 2, rank is determined on the basis of "industry and riches" (Essays 93), and thus, people seeking rank in such a system government will seek to be successful in commerce, for only commercial success gives one "industry and riches". But in an absolute "civilized" monarchy, rank is based on "[b]irth, titles, and place" (Essays 93), qualities which do not come with being successful in the areas of trade and manufacture. Thus, while in a "civilized" monarchy commerce can flourish, it will not. It will not because, wanting status, those engaged in commerce "will be tempted to throw up their commerce, in order to purchase some of those employments, to which privileges and honours are annexed" (Essays 93). Hume concludes: "Commerce, therefore, in my opinion, is apt to decay in absolute governments, not because it is there less secure, but because it is less honourable" (Essays 93). It is less honourable because in an absolute "civilized" monarchy the qualities and skills of traders, manufacturers and the "middle rank" generally, are not valued or honoured and, therefore, do not secure high status. As a result,

trading, manufacturing, and commerce will suffer in an absolute "civilized" monarchy. In order for commerce to develop in a state what is required is not only security of private property, but also the appropriate system of ranking. An absolute "civilized" monarchy satisfies the first condition, but not the second.

Given the feebleness of commerce and manufacturing in absolute "civilized" monarchies, and given, as we saw in Chapter 2, that Hume thinks that there is a connection between the growth of commerce and the improvement of the conditions of the poor, it follows that in "civilized" monarchies the poor remain in conditions of misery: "The poverty of the common people is a natural, if not an infallible effect of absolute monarchy." Hume, as we saw, had the desire to improve the condition of the poor. The fact that absolute "civilized" monarchies do not contribute to this end is clearly something else in the disfavour of this form of government. Hume does not go on to say that the condition of the poor will necessarily improve in a free government, but he thinks that this form of government is likely to have such a result (Essays 265).

Hume thinks that absolute "civilized" monarchies are governments of law. But what does this mean? It means that everyone, including "[e]very minister or magistrate, however eminent, must submit to the general laws, which govern the whole society" (Essays 125). But there is one exception: "In a civilized monarchy, the prince alone is unrestrained in the exercise of his authority, and possesses alone a power, which is not bounded by any thing but custom, example, and the sense of his own interest" (Essays 125). This situation, however, is dangerous, which is why, when Hume declares that absolute "civilized" monarchies "answer most of the ends of political society" he adds that this is so

only when the ruler is "just and prudent" (Essays 125). But there is no guarantee that this condition will be met. For such monarchies are hereditary, and Hume thinks, as we saw in Chapter 2, that hereditary monarchies leave too much to chance. One is never sure of the character of the person who will end up on the throne. Hume brings out the the dangerous nature of hereditary absolute monarchy by asking us to "[c]ompare the FRENCH government under HENRY III and HENRY IV." In the former case there was "[o]ppression, levity, artifice on the part of the ruler; faction, sedition, treachery, rebellion, disloyalty on the part of the subjects." In the latter case, however, "the government, the people, every thing seemed to be totally changed; and all from the difference of the temper and conduct of these two sovereigns. Instances of this kind may be multiplied, almost without number" (Essays 15). In Chapter 2 we saw that Hume complains that in a hereditary limited monarchy the monarch can be restrained by the other elements of the constitution but never perfectly. As a result, the character of the king plays a role in the operations of government, thus making such monarchies inherently unstable. This problem is even greater in an absolute hereditary monarchy where the king is in no way restrained, and this fact "is one of the great inconveniences attending that form of government" (Essays 15).

As we know, this problem cannot be solved by replacing the hereditary monarch with a elected one. Hereditary monarchy is far superior to elective monarchy (Essays 18), and, thus, hereditary absolute monarchy is superior to elective absolute monarchy. But even hereditary absolute monarchy is seriously defective given that there is no guarantee that the person who inherits the throne will be of suitable character. True, modern humans are more humane and gentle than their

ancestors. Knowledge, science, and art increase humanity, and these are far stronger in the modern world than in previous ages. Today, the nations of Europe are all "polite and learned" (Essays 99; Essays 91). Thus, Hume is convinced that "[o]ur modern education and customs instil more humanity and moderation than the ancient" (Essays 94). And this is true, not only of ordinary people, but also of rulers (whose humanity is further increased by the arts of government). According to Hume, no modern European absolute monarch is "so bad as TIBERIUS, CALIGULA, NERO, or DOMITIAN." But, still, "[i]t must...be confessed, that, though monarchical governments have approached nearer to popular ones, in gentleness and stability; they are still inferior" (Essays 94). They are inferior because they cannot exclude the possibility that a Henry III will come to the throne and bring with him harsh rule, instability, and sedition.

For Hume, absolute "civilized" monarchies embody the rule of law, but only imperfectly. For under such a form of government, all are bridled by the law except the monarch. He is in a position to exercise arbitrary power and this can cause severe problems. We noted in Chapter 2 that, for Hume, the rule of law is "the perfection of civil society" (Essays 41). Absolute "civilized" monarchies fail to attain this perfection.

Here we should note that there is another source of instability in a modern absolute "civilized" monarchy. In order to function properly, monarchies require that the people have "a superstitious reverence for princes" (Essays 119): "[M]onarchies...[receive] their chief stability from a superstitious reverence to...princes" (Essays 126). But, as noted in Chapter 2, Hume believes that in the modern world there is no such reverence. Today, any talk of the king as God's lieutenant on

earth provokes (to Hume's approval) nothing but laughter (Essays 51). Such a change in attitude contributes to the weakening of the monarch's authority.

For Hume, a modern state requires a form of government which gives no opportunity to the ruler to exercise his power in an arbitrary fashion. A modern state also requires a form of government which allows a commercial society to flourish. Absolute "civilized" monarchies fail to meet both these requirements.

In addition to absolute "barbarous" and "civilized" monarchies, Hume distinguishes a third type of monarchy, namely, limited monarchy. Hume's favourite example of this form of government is Britain. And if we can draw any general conclusions from what Hume has to say about Britain's limited monarchy, then it seems that he believes that this form of government functions quite successfully in the modern world.²

Limited monarchy is a form of free government (Essays 10; Essays 265; Essays 493), meaning, first, that it is a form of government which divides power among several bodies (thus checking the power of the hereditary monarch) and, second, that it is a form of government which embodies the rule of law. The rule of law arises in a limited monarchy because of the "mutual watchfulness and jealousy" of the various parts (Essay 12). In the case of Britain's free government, under which "every man is restrained by the most rigid laws" (Essays 31), the republican element of the constitution must "for its own preservation ...maintain a watchful jealousy over the magistrates, to remove all discretionary powers, and to secure every one's life and fortune by general and inflexible laws (Essays 12). Given that limited monarchies subject all to equal laws, they can foster great progress. And when, through luck, the various parts of the constitution are properly

balanced, the nation flourishes. Remaining with the British example of limited monarchy, Hume declares that, as a result of sixty years of "uninterrupted harmony ...between our princes and our parliaments",

Public liberty, with internal peace and order, has flourished almost without interruption: Trade and manufactures, and agriculture, have encreased: The arts, and sciences, and philosophy, have been cultivated...And the glory of the nation has spread itself all over EUROPE; derived equally from our progress in the arts of peace, and from valour and success in war. So long and so glorious a period no nation almost can boast of: Nor is there another instance in the whole history of mankind, that so many millions of people have, during such a space of time, been held together, in a manner so free, so rational, and so suitable to the dignity of human nature (Essays 508).

Hume agrees with the "established opinion, that commerce can never flourish but in a free government" (Essays 92). And, a limited monarchy, being a type of free government, fosters a luxurious commercial society. This comes out in the above long quote. Now, we noted Hume's view that in order for a strong commercial sector to grow in a state what is required is not only the rule of law but also a system of ranking which dispenses status on the basis of "industry and riches". Hume attributes to Britain such a system of ranking, as we saw in Chapter 2. And, of course, the growth of commerce means that in a limited monarchy the material condition of the people is very likely to improve. Also, since knowledge and the arts flourish in a limited

monarchy (as the above long quote makes clear) it follows that the inhabitants of such states are more moderate, gentle, and humane. This is true of both subjects and rulers. Thus, since the seventeenth century, "the tempers of men" in Britain have become "more civilized" and the government relies less on "those violent exertions of prerogative" (H 5 179). Today "ENGLAND...is remarkable...for humanity, justice, and liberty" (Essays 414 fn. 100).

Limited monarchy, then, is "a species of government" which has "many advantages". But, at the same time it has one "unavoidable disadvantage": It is inherently unstable (Essays 46): "[A]ll human governments, particularly those of a mixed frame, are in continual fluctuation" (H 5 160). One source of instability is the loss of all superstitious reverence for the monarch. The British, as we noted in Chapter 2, have overcome this problem by means of royal patronage. But Hume is not convinced that this practice will always work, especially in times of "shock or convulsion" (Essays 51). But the main source of instability, as we already know, is the inability to perfectly balance the various parts which make up the constitution of a limited monarchy: "[It is not] possible to assign to the crown such a determinate degree of power, as will, in every hand, form a proper counterbalance to the other parts of the constitution" (Essays 46). This is the great problem with limited monarchy, a problem which can arise, but is not inherent, in the second type of free government that Hume distinguishes, namely, republics.

Hume distinguishes between two types of republic, the well-contrived and the badly-contrived. He uses the ancient "barbarous" republics as his prime example of the latter type. As we have seen, Hume believes that it was in these republics that the rule of law, the division of

powers, knowledge, science, the arts of government (and thus humanity), commerce etc, first appeared. Compared to their neighbouring absolute "barbarous" monarchies, these states were more stable and better able to protect the lives and property of their inhabitants. But when compared to modern European states, they seem little better than "barbarous" monarchies: "[T]he disorder, diffidence, jealousy, enmity, which must prevail [in ancient republics], are not easy for us to imagine in this age of the world" (Essays 407). "[T]heir wars were more bloody and destructive [than our own], their governments more factious and unsettled [than our own], commerce and manufactures more feeble and languishing [than today], and the general police more loose and irregular [than in modern states]" (Essays 421). All those qualities a state must have in order to thrive and prosper first appeared in the ancient republics. But, as the above quote makes clear, they appeared very imperfectly. The ancient republics were "turbulent, factious, seditious, disorderly" (Essays 436). This explains why Hume labels these states "barbarous".

Hume brings together the various reasons for the bad shape of ancient republics in his description of ancient Athens. In the "tumultuous government" of this city-state "[i] [t]he whole collective body of the people voted in every law, [ii] without limitation of property, without any distinction of rank, [iii] without controul from any magistracy or senate; and consequently without regard to order, justice, or prudence" (Essays 368-69). Let us investigate each defect in turn.

(i) According to Hume, "a people voting by their representatives, form[s] the best...DEMOCRACY" (Essays 18). Direct representation, as was practised in the ancient republics, can only lead to chaos. For

"[i]f the people debate, all is confusion", and the people become "a mere mob, and swayed in their debates by the least motives" (Essays 523).³

(ii) In any republic (or in any state with a constitution containing a republican element e.g Britain's limited monarchy) voting ought to be restricted to those who meet an appropriate qualification test. In this sense, but not in the sense of a nobility, republics require an aristocracy (the rule of the best). But in the ancient republics, where the people "were extremely fond of liberty" (Essays 408), all "freemen" believed that they were entitled "to every power and privilege of the commonwealth." Thus, they resisted any property qualification test for elections and public office. "[W]hen even the meanest and most beggarly were excluded from the legislature and from public offices", they threw the state into "perpetual discontents and seditions" (Essays 415). The lack of such a test, the lack of an aristocracy, Hume thinks, was "[o]ne general cause of the disorders, so frequent in all ancient governments" (Essays 415).

(iii) We have already mentioned that, according to Hume, where a constitution incorporates the principle of the division of powers but does not have the appropriate "checks and controuls" among these powers, the only result can be "disorder...and the blackest crimes" (Essays 15-16; Essays 43). No such controls existed in the ancient republics, and thus the popular elements were able to turn these states into "tyrannical Democrac[ies]" (Essays 416).

As a result of these defects, ancient republics were plagued by two grave weaknesses.

(a) As we have seen, Hume thinks that the brutality of rulers causes rebellion among the people. But he also thinks that the disorderliness

of a population fuels the brutality of a ruler (Essays 490). Thus, because of the seditious and turbulent nature of the people in ancient republics, rulers were forced to commit great "acts of violence" (Essays 414). The moderating and humanising "arts of government" might have first emerged in the ancient republics. But they (like everything else) emerged very imperfectly. Thus, "[t]he maxims of ancient politics contain, in general, so little humanity and moderation" (Essays 414).

(b) Hume is convinced that the people's "extreme love of liberty... must have banished every merchant and manufacturer" from the ancient republics (Essays 419). As a result, (i) in the ancient republics, commerce and industry were "feeble and languishing" (Essays 421) and, thus, these states were unable to reap the economic, social, and political effects of commerce. (ii) As we mentioned in Chapter 2, Hume thinks that every state must have an independent magistracy to lead the people. Which group forms this body in a state depends upon its form of government. In a republic, this task must fall upon the shoulders of the commercial middle rank. But given that ancient republics "banished" all merchants, these states lacked the independent magistracy they ought to have had. The people were leaderless and behaved like a rabble.

Hume thinks that the modern well-contrived republics of Europe are far superior to the "barbarous" ones of the past.

The antient Republics were somewhat ferocious, and torn [internally] by bloody factions...Modern Manners have corrected this Abuse; and all the Republics in Europe, without Exception, are so well governd, that one is at a Loss to which we should give the Prefer-

ence (L II 306).

Thus, "[a]t present, there is not one republic in EUROPE, from one extremity of it to the other, that is not remarkable for justice, lenity, and stability" (Essays 416). These states incorporate the principle of indirect representation. They restrict voting to persons of the appropriate rank and economic status, and thus are "well-tempered Aristocracies" (Essays 416), in the sense that, in such states, the best people, the middle rank, form the political backbone of the nation. This rank leads society.⁴ Finally, the constitutions of the modern republics are properly balanced. Hume thinks that, like limited monarchies, republics can have great problems with the checks and controls designed to balance the various parts of the constitution. But, unlike limited monarchies, this problem is not inherent in a republican constitution (Essays 46). If carefully constructed, republics can have well-balanced constitutions. Take, for example, the republican government of Venice. Its "stability and wisdom" spring from the fact that "the forms and institutions, by which...[its] parts are regulated" place "a considerable check on the depravity of mankind." The Venitian constitution is free from the influence of "the humours and education of particular men" and operates solely on the basis of "a system of laws...[which] regulate the administration of public affairs." Nothing is left to "chance" (Essays 24). Rather, everything depends upon impartial structures and "checks and controuls".

So, according to Hume, modern well-contrived republics, have all the advantages of limited monarchies. They foster commerce and industry, and contribute to the growth of luxury and agriculture. They improve the humanity of rulers and subjects, and promote the well-being of the common people. And, of course, they embody the rule of law. For, "a

republic necessarily, by an infallible operation, gives rise to LAW" (Essays 118). But, according to Hume, they have one great advantage over limited monarchies: They are not inherently unstable. If carefully constructed, they are capable of great stability.

All this does not mean that Hume sees the modern republics of Europe as flawless. For example, in constructing the constitution of his Perfect Commonwealth, he reflects upon the defects of the Dutch constitution (Essays 526). However, it is clear that, for Hume, of all forms of government that have existed so far these modern republics are best able to meet the political, social, and economic needs of a state in the modern world (with limited monarchies close behind).

"[T]he Republican Form of [Government] is by far the best" Hume announced in 1775. The ancient republics were seriously defective, "but they were still much preferable to the Monarchies or [Aristocracies]" of the time "which seem to have been quite intolerable" (L II 306). Modern republics are superior in every way to the ancient ones, but still they have their problems. These problems can, Hume thinks, be corrected, thus creating a well-contrived republic. A republic "modelled with masterly skill" (Essays 528), such as the Perfect Commonwealth, is the best example of the best form of government.

II

Our aim in this chapter is to show that, for Hume, Britain's transformation into a Perfect Commonwealth will not be a radical one. And to establish this we can draw upon, not only what we have said so far in this chapter, but also upon what we have said so far in this thesis.

We should begin by making an important point, namely, that the

British limited monarchy and Hume's Perfect Commonwealth are organised differently as systems of government. Without going into any detail, the British system of government (as we have already seen) involved three separate, though interdependent, elements, each element acting as a check or balance on the other two: A hereditary King, representing the monarchical part of the constitution, the Lords, also founded on a hereditary principle and representing the aristocratic part of the constitution, and the Commons which represented the constitution's popular element. Here, the franchise was restricted by a number of different qualifications depending on the type of electoral district, county or borough.⁵ Executive power was lodged in the King and legislative in the Parliament, though the King also plays a role in legislation.⁶ In contrast, the Perfect Commonwealth will consist of a balance between "two councils, a lesser and greater; or, in other words, a senate and people. The people, as HARRINGTON observes, would want wisdom, without the senate: The senate, without the people, would want honesty" (Essays 522-23). Senators are to be elected annually by the county representatives -- Hume's "the people" (Essays 523-24). Each representative will in turn be elected annually by those in his parish and county who meet the required property voting qualification (Essays 516).⁷ Executive power will be held by the senate and, while this body must debate every new law, it will have no power to enact law. It is the county representatives alone who will "possess the whole legislative power" (Essays 517). Finally, the nation's official opposition party (of interest), the "court of competitors", can propose legislation to the senate. If this is rejected it "may appeal to the people" (Essays 520).

Even on the basis of these brief comments, it is clear that the

introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will give that nation a very different system of government from the one that it currently possess. However, it is important to note that, for Hume, underlying these different systems are the same principles. For, as we saw in the previous section, he takes both limited monarchies and well-contrived republics to be forms of free government. Thus, both are founded on the principles of the rule of law and the division of powers. Of course, as we saw in the previous section, Hume thinks that in a well-contrived republic the latter principle is more perfectly established than in a limited monarchy. But this does not alter the fact that Hume founds the Perfect Commonwealth on political pillars which are identical to those of his Britain. Thus, while Britain and the Perfect Commonwealth have different systems of government, they have identical forms of government, in which case the establishment of the Perfect Commonwealth in Britain will leave the fundamental pillars of the British constitution untouched.

In addition to retaining these pillars of the British limited monarchy, Hume emphasises that the Perfect Commonwealth will retain another central feature of his nation's political system, what he considers to be "[t]he chief support of the BRITISH government", namely, parties of interest (though in a much improved form) (Essays 525).

All this means that, for Hume, the Perfect Commonwealth can be established in Britain without upsetting that nation's political fundamentals. Of course, a novel system of government will be introduced, and the principle of the division of powers will be better founded, as will the parties of interest. But, importantly, these political pillars will not be demolished, but will, more or less, remain intact.

Given this we can say that, as a form of government, the Perfect

Commonwealth will not be completely foreign to the British public. Thus the public will not be shocked by the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain. But this is not all. Since the British public is used to living under a free government, since it is accustomed to the way in which this form of government works, and since the Perfect Commonwealth is a form of free government, it follows that the public already has many of the fundamental political habitual patterns of behaviour and thought needed to function in the Perfect Commonwealth. And, in the Perfect Commonwealth, it will be able to retain many of these habits that it acquired under the limited monarchy. The public will not have to be significantly re-educated in this area. Of course re-education will be necessary at the secondary level of system of government, and we shall return to this problem in Chapter 8. But here we should remember (from Chapter 4) that the Humean individual is open to new, better ideas and beliefs, new, better patterns of thought and behaviour, and is quite capable of embracing a new, better system of government.

As we have seen, Hume thinks that what is valued in a nation is determined by its form of government: Birth, titles etc in monarchies; industry, present wealth etc in republics; and both types of goods in limited monarchies, since they have constitutions with both a republican and a monarchical element. Thus, for Hume, the transformation of Britain into a well-contrived republic will not require the people to alter in any radical way their views about what is valuable. For, the British (whose constitution contains a republican element) already value industry, present wealth etc and they can continue to do so in the Perfect Commonwealth, though they will have to give up the belief that birth, titles etc ought to be valued.

Given Hume's view that in a republic the middle rank must form the nation's independent magistracy, it follows that in the Perfect Commonwealth this state of affairs will exist. Now, as we saw in Chapter 2, Hume thinks that in his Britain (given its mixed constitution) both nobles and merchants are in fact in positions of authority (Essays 207), though only the former ought to be. Thus, for Hume, Britain's move to a well-contrived republic will not require the introduction of any radical reforms in order for the middle rank to emerge as that nation's independent magistracy, for it is already in a position of authority. And the people will not have to undergo any violent change in their mental and behavioural habits in order to accept this group as their leaders, for they already do so.

According to Hume, Britain has a free government and is a commercial nation. We can therefore take it that, in his opinion, the natural rules of justice, which are rules of commerce, are more or less effectively enforced in Britain. I say "more or less" because, as we saw in Chapter 2, Hume thinks that, of all the nations of Europe, Britain has the severest trade barriers. Given this, and given that the rules of justice are rules of commerce, it follows that Hume must think that in Britain these rules are hindered. But it is important to note that he does not take this hindrance to be severe, for he thinks that Britain is a successful commercial nation. In fact, London is one of "[t]he three greatest trading towns now in Europe" (Essays 92). Thus we can say that, while Hume thinks that in Britain there are restrictions upon the rules of justice, these are not great, and the rules of justice are more or less allowed to run their full course.

Now, the Perfect Commonwealth is a form free government. Thus, like the British limited monarchy it is a form of government which encoura-

ges the growth of commerce. Given Hume's disapproval of severe trade barriers, we can take it that no such barriers will exist in the Perfect Commonwealth. In this state, the rules of justice will be more perfectly enforced than they are in Britain. In fact, I think that it is safe to say that in the Perfect Commonwealth the laws of nature will be perfectly realised.⁸

So, both the British limited monarchy and Hume's well-contrived republican Perfect Commonwealth are forms of free government, and, therefore, turn their states into commercial nations by allowing the natural rules of justice to flourish (though more so in the Perfect Commonwealth.) This is important, for it means that, for Hume, the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will require neither the existing principles of justice, nor the habits of the public underlying these principles, to be upset in any significant way. True, as we said, Hume must think that the principles of justice will be more effectively enforced in the Perfect Commonwealth than they are now in Britain. But, as we also said, he does not see these rules as hindered to any great degree in Britain. The natural rules of justice are allowed to flourish in Britain almost as effectively as they will be in the Perfect Commonwealth. If this is correct, then it follows that, for Hume, the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will not require that nation to undergo any sort of radical transformation in the area of justice (and the habits supporting justice). The introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will leave the existing rules and habits of justice more or less untouched, and this, no doubt, will make it easier for Britain to be transformed into a well-contrived republic.⁹

In the previous chapter we saw that nothing Hume has to say about

justice precludes us from labelling him a conservative/radical reformer. We now discover that nothing Hume has to say about justice prevents us from taking "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously in the case of Britain. For, if what we have said so far is correct, then, according to Hume, Britain's conversion into the Perfect Commonwealth will not require the principles of justice (or the habits of justice) to be upset in any radical way.

Since both the Perfect Commonwealth and Britain are commercial nations we can take it that, for Hume, the British people will not have to significantly alter the habits and practices they have developed in the realms of commerce, industry, and manufacturing once the Perfect Commonwealth is established (just as they will not have to radically alter their fundamental habitual political beliefs and practices). In fact, given that, for Hume, political causes (i.e forms of government) have social and economic effects, and given that Britain's limited monarchy and the Perfect Commonwealth are the same political cause, it seems that, in his view, the social and economic institutions, practices, and beliefs that will exist in the Perfect Commonwealth will closely resemble those of modern Britain. For Hume, Britain and the Perfect Commonwealth are close, not only politically, but also socially and economically. Thus, once again we can say that Hume ensures that Britain's adoption of his well-contrived republican constitution can be achieved without radically upsetting the established order.

Of course, the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will require the public to alter its object of allegiance (just as it will require the public to alter its political habits at the level of system of government, though not at the fundamental level of form of government). This is an important problem, and it (like the latter

problem) will be dealt with in the Chapter 8. But leaving this problem aside for now, if all that we have said so far is correct, then it seems that, for Hume, the establishment of the Perfect Commonwealth in Britain will not call for any radical economic, social, or political discontinuity with that nation's past. It will not call for the introduction of a radically new situation or order in that country. Hume ensures that under the well-contrived republican constitution of the Perfect Commonwealth the British will be able to retain many of the economic, social, and political principles they are used to, along with the beliefs, practices, and institutions that these principles support. Of course, novelties will be introduced, but at the same time much of what is established will be kept (or kept in a much improved form). Thus, for Hume, the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will not be a radical reform but a conservative/radical one.

III

We have already seen that, according to Hume, reformers must take human nature seriously and must never introduce innovations which are "violent" in the sense that they violate the course of nature (Essays 260). Thus, it is important for us to show, not only that, as a reform, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is (in the case of Britain) a conservative/radical reform, but also that it is consistent with the requirements of nature.

(a) Hume thinks that of all the plans of government that have been presented to the world since Plato's Republic, Harrington's Oceana is "the only valuable model" (Essays 514). This, however, does not mean that Hume finds the constitutional arrangements of Oceana flawless. He

finds three "chief defects" with these arrangements. Of these, only one is important for us, namely, that "[Oceana's] Agrarian [Law] is impracticable" (Essays 515). Now, according to Harrington, the balance of power in a state depends upon the balance of property. Thus, the Agrarian Law, which deals with property, is one of the "Fundamentall Lawes of Oceana". Without going into any detail, the main aim of the Agrarian Law is to limit property: No one in the Commonwealth will be allowed to have an income which exceeds two thousand pounds a year. In this way Harrington hopes to prevent his Commonwealth from sliding into monarchy.¹⁰ Now, as we said, Hume finds the Agrarian Law "impracticable". Why? Because "[m]en will soon learn the art, which was practised in ancient ROME, of concealing their possessions under other people's name; till at last, the abuse will become so common, that they will throw off even the appearance of restraint" (Essays 515). We have already seen Hume's view that "avidity", the desire for goods, is rooted in human nature. It is "insatiable, perpetual [and]... universal" (T 492). Thus, any attempt to uproot this quality of human nature (as Harrington seeks to) is bound to fail.¹¹ The fact that Hume's condemnation of the Agrarian Law can be found in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is a clear indication that the Perfect Commonwealth will respect man's natural avidity. This idea is consistent with the view expressed a number of times that in Hume's well-contrived republic the rules of justice that have been provided by wise nature will be fully realised and allowed to run their full course without hindrance. This respect for the natural rules of justice is respect for what has been provided by wise nature.

(b) Commerce is founded on the rules of justice. Thus, where these rules flourish, so does commerce. Given that these rules will flourish

in the Perfect Commonwealth it follows that this state will be a commercial nation. And, importantly, this characteristic of Hume's state is in harmony with the requirements of nature, for commerce, Hume thinks, has been ordained by nature (T 514; Essays 324; Essays 329).

(c) Wise nature demands commerce. Thus, we can say that the effects of commerce are in harmony with the requirements of nature. One such effect, as we have seen, is free government. Now the Perfect Commonwealth is a type of free government. Thus, politically, the Perfect Commonwealth does not violate the natural course of things. And since political causes have economic and social effects, and since the Perfect Commonwealth is a "natural" political cause, it follows that, for Hume, its economic and social effects are also "natural".

(d) As we saw in Chapter 2, Hume approves of "equality" of property in the sense that "[e]very person, if possible, ought to enjoy the fruits of his labour, in a full possession of all the necessaries, and many of the conveniences of life. No one can doubt, but such an equality is most suitable to human nature" (Essays 265; my emphasis). In the Perfect Commonwealth, where, we can safely assume, the natural rules of justice will be perfectly realised and industry, commerce, and luxury will flourish, "equality" in Hume's sense will be fully respected, and, therefore, so will this aspect of human nature.

(e) Hume refuses to exclude religion from his state (Essays 520). This is very odd given (a) Hume's fear (noted in Chapter 1) of the tendency of religion to go superstitious or enthusiastic, and therefore cause great socio-political disharmony, and (b) Hume's belief that enthusiasm might be the cause of the downfall of the Perfect Commonwealth (Essays 529). (And here we should recall Hume's view that no state is immortal (Essays 51), not even the Perfect Commonwealth (Essays 528-29)). Why,

then, does Hume not exclude religion from his state? Because religious belief is "universal in human nature" (Essays 61) and is "intractable" (Essays 40): "[A]ll mankind have a strong propensity to religion" (Essays 199 fn. 3). Thus, to excluded religion from the Perfect Commonwealth would be "violent".

(f) Given Hume's fear and hatred of political parties (Essays 55), it is surprising to find political parties in the Perfect Commonwealth (Essays 525). This is not only because it is impossible and impracticable to remove such parties from free governments (Essays 493), but also because factions "naturally propagate themselves" among humans (Essays 55; my emphasis), that is, factionalism is natural to man. Thus, as in the case of religion, to exclude factions from the Perfect Commonwealth would violate the requirements of nature.

(g) The Perfect Commonwealth contains "rank[s]" (Essays 522). This is important for us given that Hume thinks that ranks "arise necessarily, because uniformly, from the necessary and uniform principles of human nature" (T 402). Rank is natural to society. The fact that the society of the Perfect Commonwealth is divided into ranks is another indication that it respects the demands of nature.

(h) We already know from Chapter 2 Hume's view that it is "violent, and contrary to the more natural and usual course of things" (Essays 259; my emphasis) for a government to use its people in order that they may contribute to the "greatness of the state", that is, in order that they may fulfil the government's colonial and military ambitions. Such a thing is likely to happen when a state lacks industry and commerce and, as a result, "superfluous hands" are directed into the nation's fleets and armies (Essays 256-57). In the Perfect Commonwealth, where commerce and manufacturing are strong and thus able to absorb all

"superfluous hands", such an "unnatural" practice will never be permitted. In fact, the Perfect Commonwealth will have "a fundamental law against conquests" (Essays 529).

We could expand this list of examples indicating the harmony between the Perfect Commonwealth and the dictates of nature, but there is no need. Enough has been said to show that the Perfect Commonwealth is not a "violent" reform. If this is correct, then in this subsection, we have made an important contribution to our aim (as we did in the previous subsection and as we shall in the next one). For, according to Hume, reforms must be in harmony with "the common bent of mankind" (Essays 260). Thus, if we could not show that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is a natural reform, then we would be in trouble. But, as the above examples make clear, economically, socially, and politically the Perfect Commonwealth is such a reform. It is a reform which takes the course of nature (including human nature) seriously.

VI

Hume condemns "any fine imaginary republic, of which a man may form a plan in his closet" (Essays 52). Is "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" such a plan? If it is, then, clearly, we cannot take it seriously. But it is not. As we shall see now, Hume's well-contrived republic is the product of reflection upon experience, that is, experimental reasoning.

(a) As mentioned a number of times, in constructing his Perfect Commonwealth, Hume takes into account the existing Dutch constitution. However he makes "alterations" to this constitution, "alterations... [which] seem all evidently for the better" (Essays 526). In other

words, in designing his preferred form of government, Hume reflects upon his "experience" of the Dutch constitution. And here we should note that this design is also the result of Hume's reflection upon his vast knowledge (and, in this sense, "experience") of the ancient republics (Essays 527-28).

(b) Hume the anatomist knows that religion is a deep human instinct. Thus, religion must exist in the Perfect Commonwealth. However, Hume also knows about the dangers of religion. He knows the destructive consequences of superstition and enthusiasm. Reflecting on all this, on man's religious instinct and on the adverse effects of this instinct, in the Perfect Commonwealth Hume decides to place religion under the complete control of the state (Essays 520; Essays 525). While reformers must never ignore human nature, they can, and must, reflect on this nature and "give it all the improvements of which it is susceptible" (Essays 260). State control of man's natural passion for religion is such an improvement.

(c) The Perfect Commonwealth must contain parties, for (among other things) people naturally divide themselves into parties. However, party division can lead to terrible conflict. Thus, as in the case of religion, this natural characteristic of man can, and must, be improved. In the Perfect Commonwealth factionalism will be organised in such a way that there will exist only parties of interest (which, according to Hume, are "the most reasonable, and the most excusable" parties (Essays 59)). As a result, factionalism in the Perfect Commonwealth will do "all the good without any of the harm" (Essays 525). Thus, after reflecting upon his "experience" of factionalism, Hume ensures that the parties in the Perfect Commonwealth will be of the beneficial and salutary type.

(d) According to Hume, human nature is such that, when people debate in "numerous assemblies", they "fall into disorder" and become a "mere mob" (Essays 523). Given the principle of sympathetic perception, "[w]hen an absurdity strikes a member [of a large assembly], he conveys it to his neighbour, and so on, till the whole be infected" (Essays 523). Clearly, this adverse consequence of sympathy must not be allowed to find expression in the Perfect Commonwealth. This is achieved by dividing the Commonwealth into counties, each with only 100 representatives. In other words, in the Perfect Commonwealth, discussion and debate will take place in small assemblies. As a result, the people "may debate with safety, and every inconvenience seems to be prevented" (Essays 523). For, when people debate in small bodies, "reason can prevail over the whole. Influence and example being removed, good sense will always get the better of bad among a number of people" (Essays 523). As Hume says elsewhere: "[W]hen dispersed in small bodies...[people] are more susceptible both of reason and order; the force of popular currents and tides is, in a great measure, broken; and the public interest may be pursued with some method and constancy" (Essays 36). Thus, the division of the Perfect Commonwealth into counties is the result of experience of, and reflection upon, human nature.

As we said, Hume condemns plans of government which spring from abstract theorising. Clearly, the Perfect Commonwealth is not such a plan.

VII

Hume opens "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" with the following para-

graph:

It is not with forms of government, as with other artificial contrivances; where an old engine may be rejected, if we can discover another more accurate and commodious, or where trials may safely be made, even though the success be doubtful. An established government has an infinite advantage, by that very circumstance of its being established; the bulk of mankind being governed by authority, not reason, and attributing authority to any thing that has not the recommendation of antiquity. To tamper, therefore, in this affair, or try experiments merely upon the credit of supposed argument and philosophy, can never be part of a wise magistrate, who will bear a reverence to what carries the mark of age; and though he may attempt some improvements for the public good, yet he will adjust his innovations, as much as possible, to the ancient fabric, and preserve entire the chief pillars and supports of the constitution (Essays 512-13).

Whelan describes this opening paragraph as a "disclaimer".¹² In other words, according to Whelan, Hume opens "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" by telling us that the recommendations of this essay should not be taken seriously. But this is an odd thing to say. For why would Hume want to disclaim a constitutional arrangement whose practicability he defends (Essays 526)? And why would Hume begin his essay with a disclaimer, and then in the third paragraph tell us that he is keeping this essay short so as not to offend the public (Essays 514)? Why, in

other words, would Hume renounce an essay he wrote for the public? And if he renounced it, why would he then be careful not to offend that same public?

The fact that Hume defends the practicability of "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" and has the public in mind when writing this essay is a clear indication that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" does not open with a disclaimer. Rather, it opens with the announcement that the reformist recommendations which follow are not radical. These recommendations do not discard the existing British form of government like an "old engine". For Britain and the Perfect Commonwealth have the same form of government, free government. They do not seek to take the British public in any radical way beyond what it knows. For the Perfect Commonwealth will retain many of the economic, social, and political elements of the existing British limited monarchy and, therefore, will have the "marks of age". Thus, these recommendations do respect "as much as possible, the ancient fabric" (my emphasis), but where such respect is not possible "innovations" are introduced, "innovations" which are "[on] the side of reason, liberty, and justice" as all "innovations" should be (Essays 477). "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" does not demolish "the chief pillars and supports" of the existing British constitution, for the Perfect Commonwealth and the British polity share the same pillars and supports (the rule of law, the division of powers, parties of interest, the natural rules of justice). The recommendations in this essay are not "experiments" based on "supposed arguments", but "innovations" founded on (i) the requirements of wise nature and (b) Hume's reflection on his "experience" of the ancient republics and a number of existing constitutions, especially the Dutch. In "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" Hume is not "indulging

in abstract republicanism", as Whelan claims he is.¹³ Rather, the Perfect Commonwealth is the result of experimental reasoning, a method of reasoning which is consistent with conservative/radical reformism. "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is not a radical reform (in the case of Britain). It is a conservative/radical reform put forward by a conservative/radical reformer.

CHAPTER 7

So far in this thesis we have dealt with only one objection against taking "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously, namely, that Hume is restricted to conservative reformism (given the guide of life he recommends, his conception of man, and the role he assigns to habit in the cohesion of society), while his Perfect Commonwealth is a radical reform. We have seen that this objection fails. But scholars have put forward other objections designed to show that Hume did not write "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" with serious intent. We shall investigate these objections in this chapter, and see that they too fail.

I

A.

Letwin finds it impossible to take "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously because, she thinks, that in The History of England Hume expressly tells us that we ought not to do so: "The idea...of a perfect and immortal commonwealth will always be found as chimerical as that of a perfect and immortal man" (H 6 153).¹ Now, if Hume thinks that the notion of a perfect commonwealth is "chimerical", then clearly he must have written his own essay on this subject as a sort of amusement and, thus, it ought to be treated as such.

There are two problems with Letwin's interpretation of the passage from The History of England quoted above. First, in this passage Hume labels as "chimerical" the notion of a perfect and immortal commonwealth, and not just the notion of a perfect commonwealth (as Letwin takes him to be doing). In other words, Hume is telling us that a form of government which claims to be both perfect and immortal ought to be

dismissed as "chimerical".² But this in no way undermines "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth", for while the form of government that Hume constructs in this essay is perfect, it is not immortal. Hume knows that "every government must come to a period, and that death is unavoidable to the political as well as to the animal body" (Essays 51), and this is true of the Perfect Commonwealth itself (Essays 528-29). It is commonwealths which claim to be both perfect and immortal which ought to be dismissed as "chimerical", not commonwealths which claim only to be perfect.³

But even if we accept Letwin's interpretation of the passage from The History of England quoted above and understand this passage as referring to perfect commonwealths alone (in contrast to commonwealths which are both perfect and immortal), Letwin is still in trouble. For in this passage Hume neither tells us that he himself finds the notion of a perfect commonwealth as "chimerical" nor that we should do so (as Letwin clearly thinks he does). He tells us only that such a notion "will...be found...chimerical" (my emphasis). But who will find it "chimerical"? Hume gives us his answer in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" where he tells us, as already mentioned, that "the public..will be apt to regard ...disquisitions [about perfect commonwealths] both as useless and chimerical", which is why he keeps his own "disquisition" on this subject short (Essays 514). However, "the wise and learned" (one of whom is Hume) know better than this. They know that "one form of government must be allowed more perfect than another" and are aware that "[i]n all cases, it must be advantageous to know what is most perfect in the kind" in order that the perfect model might one day become a reality (Essays 513). A large part of the public "will" find talk about the perfect form of government "chimerical". It is the task

of "the wise and learned", not only to design the perfect commonwealth, but, once they have done so, to get the suspicious public to embrace it.

B.

Duncan Forbes does not directly undermine the seriousness of "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". In fact, he thinks (correctly) that, for Hume, republicanism is the best form of government. But by arguing that, for Hume, "[t]he best system of government in pure theory is the republican", and that for Hume, republicanism "was not practical politics in Britain" but instead "a purely academic subject of speculation"⁴, he does, indirectly, classify "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" as a speculative exercise, thus depriving its recommendations of any practical significance, and in turn undermining its seriousness. Given this consequence of Forbes' position, we should investigate why he thinks that, for Hume, republicanism is impracticable in the case of Britain. He has two arguments.

(a) Firstly, Forbes appeals to the conclusion of "Of the First Principles of Government": "Let us cherish and improve our ancient government as much as possible, without encouraging a passion for such dangerous novelties" (Essays 36).⁵ But what does Hume mean by "such dangerous novelties"? The context makes it clear that he means the attempt to establish a republican form of government in Britain without the leadership of the nation's political and social chiefs. For Hume describes the introduction of a republican system of government in Britain as "dangerous" only after he tells us that this "seems not to be the aim of any party amongst us" (Essays 36). In other words, if

Britain is to adopt a new system of government, then what is required (at the very least) is the direction and command of existing leaders. Without such direction only chaos can follow. In the next chapter we shall see that Hume presents us with two ways in which the Perfect Commonwealth might be established in Britain. We shall see that, in both cases, this establishment cannot be achieved without the leadership of social and political chiefs.

With this in mind, we can return to Essays 36 (quoted above) and take Hume's message to be the following: When presented with a choice between implementing a new system of government without the support of existing leaders, on the one hand, and improving the existing, ancient constitution, on the other, the British should take the latter course, for the former one would be disastrous. Without the guidance of existing leaders, any attempt to introduce a new system of government in Britain must fail. If this is correct, then, Hume says nothing at Essays 36 to preclude the possibility of the establishment in Britain of a well-contrived republic (such as that one outlined in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth) once this has become the aim of the nation's chiefs. We shall return to this in the next chapter.

(b) Secondly, Forbes appeals to a letter Hume wrote to his nephew in 1775, and derives from this letter two arguments against the practicability of republicanism in Britain for Hume. We had the opportunity to quote parts of this letter in the previous chapter. Here we must requote these parts along with the rest of the relevant passage from the letter in question.

I cannot but agree with Mr Miller, that the Republican Form of [Government] is by far the best. The antient Republics were somewhat ferocious, and torn

[internally] by bloody Factions; but they were still much preferable to the Monarchies or [Aristocracies] which seem to have been quite intolerable. Modern Manners have corrected this Abuse; and all the Republics in Europe, without Exception, are so well governd, that one is at a Loss to which we should give the Preference. But what is this general Subject of Speculation to our Purpose? For besides, that an establishd Government [cannot] without the most criminal Imputation, be disjointed from any Speculation; [Republicanism] is only fitted for a small State: And any Attempt towards it can in our [Country], produce only Anarchy, which is the immediate Forerunner of Despotism. [Will he] tell us, what is that Form of a Republic which we must aspire to? Or will [the Constit]ution be afterwards decided by the Sword? (L II 306).⁶

As I said, Forbes finds two arguments in this letter for the view that, for Hume, a British republic is impracticable, and thus, indirectly, two arguments against taking "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously:

(i) We may state Forbes' first argument as follows. While Hume endorses republicanism in his letter to his nephew, he does so only for small states. But Britain is a large state. Therefore, Forbes concludes that, for Hume, Britain is not fit for a republican form of government.⁷

In response to Forbes we should begin by pointing out that in "Idea

of a Perfect Commonwealth" Hume attacks the "common opinion" that republicanism is fit only for "a city or small territory". This form of government, he thinks, can clearly be implemented in "[a] large state, such as FRANCE or GREAT BRITAIN" (Essays 527) (if its is skilfully modelled (Essays 528)). Forbes, of course, is aware of this view put forward by Hume.⁸ Yet he clearly gives priority to the letter passage over the passage from "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". But his argument will work only if this priority is justified. Is it? I don't think so. Let me explain why.

Hume never stopped revising his Essays. The final revision of this work was in 1777, shortly before his death.⁹ Now, if Hume was convinced that only small states were capable of republicanism, surely he would have altered the relevant passage in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". But he never did. Since this essay first appeared in 1752 Hume modified and revised it a number of times.¹⁰ But he left untouched the idea expressed there that large states are fit for republicanism. Thus we should take this view as Hume's true one and treat the 1775 view expressed in the above quoted letter as a short-lived one. Clearly, it was an opinion he held, for otherwise he would not have written what he did to his nephew. But equally clearly, it was an opinion he gave up, for otherwise he would have made the necessary modifications in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth".¹¹ If this argument is correct, then Hume's opinion in his letter to his nephew that only small territories are fit for a republican form of government cannot be used to support the claim that for Hume "republicanism is a purely academic subject of speculation in Britain" and, thus, does nothing to undermine the seriousness of "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth".

(ii) The second argument Forbes derives from this letter against the practicability, for Hume, of republicanism in Britain is this: The establishment of a republic in Britain would produce only "Anarchy" which in turn must lead to "Despotism".¹² But this is not the point that Hume is making in his letter to his nephew. As Stewart has recently shown, appealing to the sentence immediately following that in which the claims about "Anarchy" and "Despotism" appear (and quoted above), Hume can, not unintelligibly, be understood as telling his nephew that before the British make any move towards republicanism they must know the type of the republic to be instituted.¹³ As we have seen, Hume distinguishes between well-contrived and badly-contrived republics. The latter do yield pernicious consequences, while the former do not. The British public must be very careful that the republican form of government they embrace is wisely constituted (such as the one advocated in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth") otherwise they will plunge the country into anarchy and despotism. The idea that Britain would be thrown into anarchy if it were to acquire a defective republican government is expressed by Hume at Essays 52. We shall deal with this passage in a moment.

C.

According to David Miller anyone reading "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is forced to "wonder how seriously Hume's 'perfect commonwealth' was meant to be taken."¹⁴ He thinks this, not only because he takes Hume to be a conservative reformer and his Perfect Commonwealth a radical reform, but also because of the "ambiguity"¹⁵ caused by a number of remarks made by Hume which, in one way or another, Miller

thinks, cast doubt over any talk of his desiring to put into practice the recommendations outlined in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". Let us examine these comments which Miller thinks cause "ambiguity".

First, Miller, like Letwin, points to the remark Hume makes in The History of England that "the idea...of a perfect and immortal commonwealth" is "chimerical".¹⁶ But, this comment, as we saw, does nothing to weaken the seriousness of "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth".

Second, like Forbes, Miller appeals to Hume's 1775 letter to his nephew, and derives from this letter the same two arguments that Forbes does, namely that (a) republicanism is not suited to large states and (b) the establishment of a republic in Britain would lead to anarchy followed by despotism.¹⁷ But as we saw when dealing with Forbes, neither (a) nor (b) cause us to question the seriousness of "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth".

Here we should note that Miller appeals to Hume's words that, "I should rather wish to see an absolute monarch than a republic in this Island" (Essays 52), in order to support his claim that, for Hume, the establishment of a republic in Britain would have chaotic consequences. For Hume makes it clear in the essay from which the above quote comes that if a republican form of government were to be established in Britain, then there would be nothing but "many convulsions, and civil wars" (Essays 53). But when we examine this passage in context we find that all Hume is doing here is arguing against the introduction into Britain of a badly-contrived republic.

This passage occurs in Hume's essay "Whether the British Government inclines more to Absolute Monarchy, or to a Republic?". Now, we know that Hume thinks that the British constitution is inherently unstable, with the monarchical and republican elements locked in combat. We also

know that he does not believe in the immortality of any form of government. Given these two views, Hume asks at the end of this essay "whether it it be more desirable for the BRITISH constitution to terminate in a popular government, or in absolute monarchy?" (Essays 51-52). He chooses the latter as more desirable. Why? Because if the constitution were to be swallowed by the republican element, then it would be led by the Commons "according to its present constitution" (Essays 52). But, as we have already seen, Hume thinks that the present Commons is defective. Thus, if the current Commons were to dominate the present constitution, then Britain would be left with a badly-contrived republic. It is the introduction of such a republic which would plunge the British nation into civil war, and not the introduction of a well-contrived republic, one like that outlined in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth".

Third, Miller points to a footnote in Hume's essay "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences".¹⁸ Here, Hume briefly touches upon the Chinese government, a government with "happiness, riches, and good police", but weak militarily, and tells us that "[p]erhaps, a pure monarchy of this kind, were it fitted for defence against foreign enemies, would be the best of all governments, as having both the tranquillity attending kingly power, and the moderation and liberty of popular assemblies" (Essays 122 fn. 13). This is a curious position for Hume to take, given his view of pure monarchies examined in the previous chapter. True, such monarchies have enough strengths for Hume to tolerate them and to attack those who disparagingly label them 'tyrannies'. But at the same time they have too many weaknesses to be endorsed as the best form of government. How, then, are we to deal with this odd passage?

We should recall that Hume is a mitigated sceptic, and as such, he condemns dogmatism. We must never cling blindly to our beliefs and never be prejudiced against the views of our opponents. Thus, in expressing the above view with respect to pure monarchies, we can take Hume as being a consistent mitigated sceptic. He has a clear preference for skilfully modelled republics above all other forms of government (as we saw in the previous chapter), but as a mitigated sceptic, he must not embrace this position dogmatically. He must always entertain the possibility that he is wrong, and, therefore, toy with the idea that pure monarchy is "perhaps...the best of all governments" (my emphasis).

The fourth of Hume's comments which Miller thinks must make us wonder about the seriousness with which Hume wrote "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" appears in a letter Hume to the Abbé le Blanc.¹⁹ Here, Hume tells the Abbé that in The History of England he "discovers the Consequences of puritanical and republican Pretensions. You wou'd have remark'd in my Writings, that my principles are, all along, tolerably monarchical, and that I abhor, that low Practice, so prevalent in England, of speaking with Malignity of France" (L I 194). But I don't think that this passage causes any "ambiguity" of the type Miller thinks it does. We know that, unlike his contemporaries, Hume tolerates France's form of government. In fact, he thinks that absolute "civilized" monarchy (or pure monarchy) has a number of special virtues. And while he does not rank such monarchies above well-contrived republics, he certainly ranks them higher than badly-contrived ones. And it seems to me that in the above passage this is exactly the point that Hume is primarily making, that is, that "civilized" monarchies are better than badly-contrived republics. This

comes out when we notice that Hume prefaces his criticism of those who speak ill of France's pure monarchy with his condemnation of "the Consequences of puritanical and Republican Pretensions." Here, I think, Hume is referring to the Commons (the republican arm of the Constitution) which Charles had to deal with, a Commons whose "leaders ...had secretly embraced the rigid tenants" of the enthusiastic Puritans (H 5 159) and which brought on Britain's seventeenth century crisis. Republicanism and enthusiasm is a dangerous recipe, a form of badly-contrived republicanism, and, thus, clearly inferior to a "civilized" monarchy. This is the point that Hume is making in his letter to Le Blanc. If this is correct, then the only conclusion we can draw from this letter about Hume's attitude towards republicanism, is that Hume prefers absolute "civilized" monarchies (such as that of France) to bad republicanism. But this is something we already know. And this preference does nothing to undermine the seriousness of "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth".

The final of Hume's observations which, Miller thinks, causes confusion, is Hume's claim that it is no "exaggeration" to say that after the 1688 Revolution "we, in this island, have ever since enjoyed, if not the best system of government, at least the most entire system of liberty, that ever was known amongst mankind" (H 6 531).²⁰ It is strange that Miller should think that this passage causes confusion, strange because Forbes, I think, has dealt with and explained this passage quite adequately. Forbes finds evidence in Hume's writings for a distinction between a nation's "legal constitution" i.e the rule of law, on the one hand, and its "political constitution" i.e the form of government, on the other, and then draws our attention to Hume's view that Britain enjoys "the best civil [legal] constitution where every

man is restrained by the most rigid laws" (Essays 31).²¹ Now, the above quote from The History of England seems to be just a reiteration of the distinction between a nation's legal and a political constitution, and of the view that Britain enjoys the best legal constitution, or "most entire system of liberty" i.e the complete absence of arbitrary coercion i.e the rigid rule of law. But The History of England quote above does not say that Britain also enjoys the best political constitution. The political constitution of Britain, her form of free government, is "good" and "advantageous" (a view we met in Chapters 2 and 6), but it is neither as good, nor as advantageous, as well-contrived republicanism.

In the end, Miller seems to admit that Hume has a preference for a republican form of government over others,²² but adds that this preference is only "theoretical".²³ True, it would be best to establish a republican form of government in a nation, but only if certain "ideal circumstances" were to prevail in that nation such as "a suitable population and a chance to devise a government from scratch." But in real life no such circumstances exist. "Instead there would be a population of a given size, at a particular stage of economic development, with inherited dispositions and loyalties, and so forth."²⁴ Thus, Miller is convinced that the establishment of a republican form of government in Britain is out of the question for Hume. Miller concludes by telling us that since for Hume limited monarchy and republicanism differ "so little in their merits" and that there is very little to choose between them, Hume's message is the conservative one that the British should uphold their existing form of government rather than strive to establish a republican form of government in their country, a form of government which is not in any significant way superior

to limited monarchy.²⁵ Hume's preference for republicanism is speculative, and is not meant to have a practical impact on Britain.

But, on all these points, Miller is wrong:

(a) It is true that the British public will have its inherited and well-established economic, social and political loyalties and dispositions. But, as we have seen, these loyalties will not cause problems for the erection of the Perfect Commonwealth in Britain (though we have not yet dealt with the problem of how the British public will change its object and habits of allegiance. This will be one of our tasks in the next chapter);

(b) As we have seen, for Hume, republics and limited monarchies are forms of government which allow the natural rules of justice to thrive. Thus, both have powerful commercial and manufacturing sectors. We can say, therefore, that, in Hume's view, both are more or less on a par economically. If this is correct, then Miller is wrong in thinking that, for Hume, Britain's stage of economic development is an obstacle to her acquiring a (well-contrived) republican constitution;

(c) Miller is wrong to suggest that, for Hume, the establishment of the Perfect Commonwealth in Britain requires the complete removal of that nation's economic, social, and political principles and institutions, and the need to start de novo or "from scratch" (as Miller puts it). For Hume, limited monarchies and well-contrived republics are so similar that many of the principles and overlying beliefs, practices, and institutions that exist in a limited monarchy can be retained as it is transformed into a well-contrived republic.

(d) While limited monarchy and (well-contrived) republicanism share many of the same strengths, the former, unlike the latter, has one great disadvantage: It is inherently unstable, which clearly makes it

inferior to well-contrived republicanism. In other words, Miller is wrong in holding that, for Hume, limited monarchies and well-contrived republics differ little in their merits.

(e) Republicanism is not merely theoretical or speculative for Hume. Hume wrote to influence the public and this (as we have seen) is true even of "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". He wanted this essay to have a practical impact on the world outside the study, which is why he defends its practicability (Essays 526).

(f) Miller's idea that, in order for a state to acquire a republican constitution, it requires a suitable population size, is a clear indication that he (like others before him) believes that, for Hume, only a small state can be owner of a republican form of government. But as we have seen this idea is mistaken.

D.

Like Forbes, neither Livingston nor Phillipson tells us directly that we ought not to take "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously. But by arguing that, for Hume, the best form of government is an absolute "civilized" monarchy, both can be taken as denying that Hume wrote "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" in order to make a practical impact on the public.

Phillipson attributes to Hume a preference for absolute "civilized" monarchy over all other forms of government on the ground that only it provides a nation with stability. Noting that, according to Hume, man needs habits in order to function, Phillipson argues that, for Hume, a nation's form of government must be such that it allows people to acquire stable socio-political habits. It must be a form of government

which incorporates the rule of law, where power is not divided, and where succession is hereditary. Only a form of government which incorporates these three elements is able to provide people with the environment they need to acquire fixed, confirmed, and orderly habits.²⁶ And which form of government embraces these three elements? Absolute "civilized" monarchy.²⁷ Further, this form of government has the added advantage of being free from factions, and, as we know, Hume detests factions (Essays 55).²⁸ For these reasons, then, Phillipson concludes that absolute "civilized" monarchy is Hume's preferred form of government. I disagree.

True, as we saw in the previous chapter, in "civilized" monarchies all are equally restrained by the law, with one exception: The monarch. And, as we saw, Hume thinks that this can have disastrous consequences if the wrong type of character comes to the throne. This fact about absolute "civilized" monarchy means that the undivided absolute power of the monarch can also give rise to pernicious results. This came out in the previous chapter. On the other hand, a republican constitution, where all parts are perfectly balanced, where the wise middle rank holds political power, and where all, without exception, are equally restrained by law, ensures great stability and order (and the social and economic benefits which spring from order).

What of Phillipson's claim that, given Hume's hatred of factions, the fact that absolute "civilized" monarchies are free from factions, is more evidence that Hume has a supreme preference for this form of government? It is also wrong. For, as we saw in Chapter 6, Hume makes it clear that factions can arise in absolute "civilized" monarchies, though they do so with greater difficulty than under any other form of government (especially free governments). Thus, Phillipson cannot

argue that Hume has a supreme preference for absolute "civilized" monarchies on the ground that they are completely free from factions. For they are not.

However, in light of what has just been said, Phillipson might want to modify his argument. He might want to say that, given Hume's intense fear of factions, and given that factions grow with most difficulty in an absolute "civilized" monarchy, such a form of government is still superior to all other forms, especially free governments, where factions grow best. But this modified argument will not work either. For, firstly, it ignores the many other advantages that free governments (especially well-contrived republics) have over "civilized" monarchies, and, secondly, it ignores the fact that, according to Hume, in a well-contrived republic the adverse consequences of factionalism can and will be eliminated. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Perfect Commonwealth will have factions, but these factions will be factions of interest and will not be allowed to create havoc. The factions in the Perfect Commonwealth will produce "all the good without any of the harm" (Essays 525). This surely negates any advantage that "civilized" monarchies have over well-contrived republics in the area of factionalism. And since, for Hume, well-contrived republics have all the strengths of "civilized" monarchies (and much more), but none of their weaknesses, it means that in Hume's mind well-contrived republics are to be preferred to absolute "civilized" monarchies.

Thus, Phillipson fails to show that, for Hume, the best form of government is an absolute "civilized" monarchy.²⁹ Does Livingston do any better? No.

Livingston declares that, while Hume is "sympathetic with republican ideals", he "always viewed absolute ["civilized"] monarchy as being, if

not the ideal form of government, at least the best working arrangement for the modern age."³⁰ Livingston gives us two reasons for this view. First, like Phillipson, he points to what, for Hume, is the "major defect" of republics, namely, that they provide the perfect breeding ground for violent factionalism.³¹ But, as we know, Hume thinks that this defect can be remedied in a properly designed republic. Livingston (like Phillipson) ignores this. Second, Livingston points to Hume's claim that "I should rather wish to see an absolute monarch than a republic in this island" (Essays 52).³² But, as we have seen, in this passage, Hume is expressing a preference for an absolute monarchy over a British republic headed by the Commons "according to its present [defective] constitution" (Essays 52), that is a badly-contrived republic. Thus, while this passage can be used to show that Hume ranks "civilized" monarchies above badly-contrived republics, it certainly cannot be used to show that Hume thinks of "civilized" monarchies as superior to well-contrived republics.

Finally, the claim that, for Hume, absolute "civilized" monarchy is the best form of government "for the modern age" is wrong. The modern age requires a form of government which ensures the freedom of the people from arbitrary coercion, and which fosters a luxurious commercial society. An absolute "civilized" monarchy cannot fulfil these ends. Only a well-contrived republic can, with the other type of free government, limited monarchy, following close behind.

E.

Annette Baier gives us three reasons why we ought not to take "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously. First, pointing to Essays 52 she

claims that Hume was not "sure that it [i.e the Perfect Commonwealth] could be tried in Britain."³³ But as we have seen Essays 52 does nothing to exclude the possibility of erecting a well-contrived British republic. Second, Baier sees "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" as "utopian in its non-provision for any transition to it [i.e the Perfect Commonwealth] from any actual constitution."³⁴ But Baier is wrong. As we shall see in the next chapter, one possible way in which Hume thinks the Perfect Commonwealth might be established is by "bring[ing] any real constitution or form of government as near as possible [to the perfect constitution], by such gentle alterations and innovations as may not give too great disturbance to society" (Essays 513-14). Thus Hume does provide for the possibility that the Perfect Commonwealth might emerge from an actually existing constitution, though he does not give us a detailed account of how an existing constitution can be transformed into the well-contrived perfect constitution outlined in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". We shall return to this topic in the next chapter and examine it in some detail.

Finally, Baier declares that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" "fails his [i.e Hume's] test of experiment."³⁵ But, again, Baier is wrong. For Hume has the Dutch republic as a working and successful "experiment". To requote: "That the foregoing plan of government [i.e the plan of the Perfect Commonwealth] is practicable, no one can doubt, who considers the resemblance that it bears to the commonwealth of the United Provinces, a wise and renowned government" (Essays 526).

II

A number of times in this chapter we have come across the idea that,

for Hume, republicanism is merely a subject of speculation. We have examined the reasons why scholars have held this view, and seen that they fail. This is important for us. For if republicanism is a mere subject of speculation for Hume, then the (well-contrived) republican state that Hume builds in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" can be nothing more than a piece of speculation. But here we should note that Hume himself seems to suggest that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is nothing but a speculative exercise. For he writes in this essay: "All I pretend to in the present essay is to revive this subject [i.e the subject of the Perfect Commonwealth] of speculation" (Essays 514; my emphasis). But it cannot be that, for Hume, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is a mere speculative exercise. For we already know that Hume the reformer wrote "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" for the public and even defends its practicability. What, then, can be going on the above quote? It is hard to say, but I think that the best answer is that here Hume is simply using a clever tactic in order to achieve his own end. Hume wanted his works (including "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth") to reach and to influence the public. But, as we have seen, the public is, according to Hume, hostile towards works about perfect commonwealths. They find them "useless and chimerical" (Essays 514). Given the public's attitude to the subject of perfect states, and given Hume's reformist intentions, what better way to get the public to read "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" than to call it a piece of "speculation"? Doing so will surely make the suspicious public less hostile towards it, less afraid and reluctant to read it.

While for the public the subject of a perfect commonwealth is "useless and chimerical", "the wise and learned" know better. They know that "[this] subject is surely the most worthy curiosity of any the wit

of man can possibly devise", for they know that "one form of government must be allowed more perfect than another" and that it is important "to know what is [the] most perfect [form of government]" given that "in some future age, an opportunity might be afforded of reducing the theory to practice" (Essays 513). But before such a reduction can take place the question of the nature of the best constitution must be "fixed by the universal consent of the wise and learned" (Essays 513). The "wise and learned" must sit down together and construct the best form of government. Hume's "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" can be seen as a contribution to this debate. However, it is more than this, for, in all humility, Hume thinks that the the form of government he constructs in this essay is one "to which I cannot, in theory, discover any considerable objection" (Essays 516). Further, he is convinced that his Perfect Commonwealth "is practicable" (Essays 526). Thus, we can say that, for Hume, not only is there no "considerable objection" in theory to his Perfect Commonwealth, but also there is no "considerable objection" in practice either. In the next and final chapter we shall investigate how Hume thinks the "theory" with which he presents us in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" might be reduced to practice; how, that is, the Perfect Commonwealth might come into being.

CHAPTER 8

I

Hume presents us with three possible ways in which the Perfect Commonwealth might be established:

- (a) "by a dissolution of some old government" (Essays 513);
- (b) "by the combination of men to form a new one [i.e government], in some distant part of the world" (Essays 513);
- (c) or, finally, by reforming "any real constitution or form of government...by such gentle alterations and innovations as may not give too great disturbance to society" (Essays 513-14).

In this section we shall investigate all three possibilities, beginning (for reasons of convenience) with the final one.¹

A.

Given that in this thesis we are concerned with the establishment of the Perfect Commonwealth in Britain only, the first question that arises in connection with this possibility is who will have the task of introducing the reforms necessary to perfect the present British constitution and thereby transform Britain into the Perfect Commonwealth. Hume does not say, but we can derive an answer to this question from what he says elsewhere. We have already noted Hume's approval of those "leading members" of the Commons during the reign of James I, "men of an independent genius and large views", who "began to regulate their opinions, more by the future consequences which they foresaw, than by the former precedents which were set before them; and they less aspired at maintaining the ancient constitution, than at

establishing a new one, and a freer, and a better" (H 5 42). It is reformist and progressive politicians such as these, I think, that Hume is counting on to perform the reforms necessary to perfect the existing British constitution and erect the Perfect Commonwealth in Britain, "wise politician[s]" who are "the most beneficial character[s] in nature, if accompanied with authority...and not altogether useless, even if deprived of it" (Essays 647), in contrast to "vulgar politicians" who are "hasty" and "dangerous" (H 6 322).²

We can assume that these wise politicians will have read the works of Hume the metaphysician and Hume the moralist. Thus, they will know a number of important things. They will know that people do in fact abandon their customs, that people do not rot in what they have inherited but, as we saw in Chapter 4, turn away from their habitual patterns of behaviour and belief. They will know, in other words, that people have what I called a "progressive tendency". Knowing this, these politicians will know that it is not futile to embark upon the task of introducing the progressive recommendations outlined in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". However, at the same time these politicians "of independent genius and and large views" will know that people are also owners of a strong "conservative tendency", that they have an "affection" for the established, a dislike or fear (at first, at least) for the new and novel, and that "too sudden and violent a change is unpleasant" to people (T 453; T 466). Knowing this, and knowing that every reformer must take human nature seriously, they will not ignore man's "conservative tendency". Thus, as they strive to introduce the Perfect Commonwealth, they will be careful not to create "too great disturbance to society" (Essays 514). They will introduce reforms slowly and gently so as not to scare and disrupt the public.

In short, then, the progressive politicians who are to introduce the Perfect Constitution in the manner under consideration know that humans are susceptible to progressive reform, which is why they embark on their reformist task in the first place. But they also know that humans are owners of a conservative tendency, and, therefore, they will introduce their reforms accordingly.

But perhaps all this talk of introducing the reforms in question in a gentle and careful manner is unnecessary. For it seems that these reforms will have the support of the public. Let me explain. According to Hume "it is in every respect better to guide [people]... like rational creatures, than to lead or drive them, like brute beasts" (Essays 604-05). And elsewhere Hume condemns reforms which are introduced in an "imperious" manner (Essays 477).³ The idea seems to be that if society is to be reformed, then these reforms must not be imposed from above in some tyrannical or "imperious" manner as if people were "brute beasts", but must be introduced after consulting the public. For only in this way can the public be guided in a rational manner, as it ought to be. Thus reforms must have public support before they are put into practice. Now, having read Hume, the wise politicians will know all this, and thus will make every effort to ensure that the public knows of their plan to reform the present constitution in accordance with the recommendations outlined in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". And there is every reason to believe that the public will (sooner or later) accept this plan. For, while the current British constitution is good and advantageous (and, therefore, we can assume, is popular among the public), it is inherently unstable. The constitution of the Perfect Commonwealth has all the economic, social, and political advantages of the British one, but without the

serious disadvantage of inherent instability.

Now, as we saw in Chapter 4, Hume is convinced that people are willing to abandon an established constitution and embrace a new one if the latter has "a evident tendency to the public good" (T 561). Both the British constitution and the constitution of the Perfect Commonwealth serve the public good, but the latter does so more perfectly. Thus, we can assume that the British public will support the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth. Of course, this support will not come immediately, given the affection that the public has for the established, and the fact that the British constitution is a good constitution, in spite of its instability. Thus, the wise politicians will have to work hard in order to win public support for their reformist task. They will point out the advantages of the new constitution over the existing one and, keeping in mind the public's conservative streak, will make sure that the public understands that the new constitution is not a radical reform. Once these points have been made to, and understood by, the public, then it seems safe to say that the public will (sooner or later) follow the reformist politicians. And note: only when the politicians have this support will they embark on their reformist task, given their desire to avoid acting in an "imperious" manner and to guide the public like "rational creatures". But if this is so, if the reformers will be backed by the public, then surely there is no need for them to be gentle and careful in introducing their reforms.

Unless I have misinterpreted Hume, I think that it is clear that the wise politicians will have to seek public support before embarking upon their reforms, and, eventually, will gain such support. But this does not mean that these politicians should be reckless in the manner in

which they introduce their reforms. Reforms supported by the public are still able to scare that same public. Just because a reform is supported by the public it does not make it less alien, less difficult to embrace, and less likely to disrupt society. True, for Hume, the Perfect Commonwealth is not a radical reform, but a conservative/radical one. The Perfect Commonwealth shares many of the economic, social, and political elements of the existing British limited monarchy. But still, its introduction will bring with it novelties, and these, Hume knows, must be introduced carefully, in spite of any support the introduction of the Commonwealth might have among the public.

But there is a further reason why Hume wants reforms to be introduced carefully and slowly, namely, the problem of allegiance. The introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth (into Britain) will require the public to alter its object of allegiance. The public will have to develop new habits of allegiance. We raised this problem in Chapter 5, but left it hanging. There we saw that, for Hume, habits of allegiance are important. They contribute to the cohesion of society. Thus, to tamper with these habits is dangerous. But not always. As we saw in Chapter 5, Hume thinks that where the government in power is pernicious and does not serve the public good, allegiance to this government (and the habits underlying this allegiance) will be weak. In this case the existing pernicious government can be removed and a new, better one can be erected without having to worry about upsetting the existing habits of allegiance. For the habits of allegiance to an existing pernicious government are weak. But (and here is our problem), what if the existing government is not pernicious? This is the situation that exists in the present case. Despite its inherent instability, Hume thinks that the existing British limited monarchy does serve the public good

(e.g. Essays 508). Thus, we can assume that, in his view, the public has a strong sense of allegiance towards it. If this is so, then the redirection of this allegiance to a new object (i.e. the Perfect Commonwealth) becomes a problem. Will not this redirection upset the strong habits of allegiance to the existing good government and thus introduce social disharmony? How can Hume deal with this problem?

He would begin by noting that the reformist politicians will know that they must "guide" people "like rational creatures" and not "lead or drive them, like brute beasts" (Essays 604-05). Thus, before embarking upon their reforms these politicians will seek public support and will not begin their reformist task until they have this support. And, as we said, sooner or later they will receive it, given that the new constitution will lack the instability of the current one and serve better the public good. In view of such support it seems that the public can and will drop the old habits of allegiance and develop new ones without massive complications. If the public supports the erection of the new constitution, then clearly the new habits of allegiance will develop (and the old ones die) a lot easier than if this erection had no public support. And, given public support, this change in the object and habits of allegiance can be achieved without plunging society into anarchy.

Unfortunately, however, things are not so simple for Hume. For even though the public will recognise the greater utility of the new constitution and even support its erection (a necessary requirement if the politicians are to guide the people in a rational manner), still we can assume that it will be difficult for that same public to abandon its existing habits of allegiance. For, in spite of its disadvantage, the British limited monarchy does serve the public good, and does so quite

well. Thus, we can assume that the public's allegiance to the existing limited monarchy is quite strong, as are the habits underlying this allegiance. If this is correct, then Hume is faced with a situation where the British public supports the establishment of the Perfect Commonwealth, but at the same time retains strong feelings of allegiance to the existing limited monarchy. And this situation could easily lead to great social disruption if not handled carefully. But here Hume would point out that the progressive politicians whose task it is to introduce the Perfect Commonwealth will have several important tools at their disposal to help them redirect the political allegiance of the public and assist them in developing new habits of allegiance among the people.

As we have seen, for Hume, education is a kind of custom (T 116-17). As we have also seen, Hume thinks that politicians have the task of educating the public in the area of "general virtue and good morals", including, of course, the virtue of allegiance. Such education is "the effect of wise laws and institutions" (Essays 55). Now, we here are discussing the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain as a result of that nation's wise politicians slowly and carefully altering the laws and institutions of the existing British polity until they are in harmony with the recommendations outlined in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". Keeping this in mind, and keeping also in mind (a) the educative task of the politicians and (b) the way in which they achieve this education, (i.e by means of wise laws and institutions), we can say that as existing laws and institutions are slowly improved (by the wise politicians), and as the public is repeatedly exposed to these slowly emerging better laws and institutions, this same public will slowly begin to acquire new habits of allegiance.

According to Hume, habit is a "powerful means of reforming the mind, and implanting in it good dispositions and inclinations" (Essays 170). For us here, the "good dispositions and inclinations" in question are those new habits of allegiance necessary to support the new object of allegiance. These new habits will be introduced slowly as existing laws and institutions are slowly perfected. In this cautious and careful way, then, by the time the existing laws and institutions have been fully replaced by the new, better, ones, the public will have abandoned its old habits of allegiance and acquired the new, necessary ones. And all this can be done without plunging society into the state of nature.

Here we should note a second tool that the politicians have at their disposal to help them instil new habits of allegiance: The "middle rank of men". As we saw in Chapter 2, Hume thinks that this rank already holds a position of authority in Britain, together with the "gentry" (Essays 207). Now, as Britain's existing laws and institutions are slowly reformed, as the the existing British constitution slowly begins to be replaced by the constitution of the Perfect Commonwealth, as Britain slowly begins to move towards well-contrived republicanism, the middle rank will slowly begin to emerge as the only group that the public regards as its independent leaders, that is, as the group that the public imitates. Being made up of men of commerce, this rank will, no doubt, support the efforts of the reformist politicians to introduce that form of government which best supports commerce, and in doing so it will, by means of the power of "imitation", carry the rest of the public with it. Thus, by imitating its leaders (the middle rank), the public will develop the new habits of allegiance necessary to support the new government.⁴

Finally, "time" will ensure that the necessary habits of allegiance

become well-founded. For,

Time...accustoms the nation to regard, as their lawful or native princes, that family, which, at first, they considered as usurpers or foreign conquerors...[In time the people] willingly consent, because they think, that, from long possession, [the prince]...has acquired a title, independent of their choice or inclination" (Essays 474-75).

Of course, there are no "princes" here who are "usurpers or foreign conquerors" and the public does not have a bitterly hostile "inclination" to the erection of the Perfect Commonwealth. In fact, it will support such an erection. But still, allegiance to the old limited monarchy (a good and advantageous form of government) will be strong. Time will take care of this. And given (i) the education by the politicians, (ii) the leadership of the middle rank, (iii) the fact that there are no hostile inclinations on the part of the public to the establishment of the Perfect Commonwealth, and (iv) the greater utility of the new constitution, the time taken for the new habits of allegiance to develop and the old ones to wither away, will be considerably less than if these factors were absent.

And with this we arrive at what is for us a very important conclusion, namely, that Hume's theory of allegiance does not prevent us from taking "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously. In Chapter 5 we saw that this theory (like his theory of justice) does not restrict Hume to conservative reformism and does not prevent us from labelling him a conservative/radical reformer. We now discover that this theory (again like his theory of justice, as we saw in Chapter 6) is not an obstacle to taking "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously

(in the case of Britain). The British can change their habits of allegiance and make the Perfect Commonwealth the object of their allegiance without plunging the nation into the state of nature.

I do not want to suggest that, for Hume, the erection of the Perfect Commonwealth in the manner under consideration will be an easy task. It will not be. But nor will it be impossible. And I have already revealed a number of factors which will make the politicians' task of erecting the Perfect Commonwealth easier. Before going on I want to reveal one more such factor: The fact that (as we saw in Chapter 6) the Perfect Commonwealth is in harmony with the natural course of things. This is important, for, according to Hume, "the less natural any set of principles are...the more difficulty will a legislator meet with in raising and cultivating them" (Essays 260). Thus, we can say that, for Hume, the "naturalness" of the Perfect Commonwealth (in conjunction with the other factors unveiled above) will make its establishment less of a chore for the reformist politicians and more likely that their task will succeed.

A serious problem arises once the Perfect Commonwealth is erected. We have already discussed the importance of habit for Hume. While he does not think that people rot in their habitual practices and beliefs, he does think that people have a deep affection for their habits and that these habits (economic, social, and political) are responsible for holding society together. Now political causes have social and economic effects and limited monarchies and well-contrived republics, both being types of free government, will have social and economic effects which are close in significant ways. Thus, as we noted in Chapter 6, the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain will not severely disrupt the public's social and economic habits; it

will not require the public to drastically alter its established social and economic patterns of behaviour and thought. But what about the public's political patterns of behaviour and thought? Is it not the case that this set of patterns will have to be altered in important ways? True, limited monarchies and well-contrived republics belong to the same form of government and so, politically, share the same "nature" or "fabric" or "fundamental pillars". This means, not only that the public will recognise the Perfect Commonwealth (as a form of government) and will not find it completely foreign and alien, thus making its introduction and reception less difficult, but also that the public, which is used to living under a free government, will already have those fundamental political habits of thought and behaviour which are needed in order to function properly under a free government. But still, as we saw in Chapter 6, the Perfect Commonwealth and the British limited monarchy operate, and are organised, differently as systems of free government. The British public might have those habits necessary for it to operate well under a free government, but it lacks the habits needed to operate under a certain type of free government, namely, a well-contrived republic. How will the wise politicians introduce these new habits?

Hume distinguishes between "moral causes" and "physical causes". Under the latter heading he places "qualities of air and climate"; under the former "the nature of the government, the revolutions of public affairs, the plenty or penury in which the people live, the situation of the nation with regard to its neighbours, and such like circumstances." Hume thinks that "moral causes" (but not "physical causes") "are fitted to work on the mind as motives and reasons, and which render a peculiar set of manners habitual to us" (Essays 198).

In other words, "moral causes" create habitual regularities. Now, "the nature of government", Hume thinks, is a "moral cause" and, thus, the type of government ruling over a nation will instill in its subjects certain habitual practices and beliefs, including habitual political practices and beliefs. If this is correct, then it seems that, with the establishment of the Perfect Commonwealth, the people will begin to acquire the political habits necessary to operate under that system of government. Habit is the result of repeated experience. Thus, by repeatedly experiencing the new constitution (a "moral cause") people will develop new political habits, habits which are consistent with the political organization of the Perfect Commonwealth (well-contrived republicanism) and which are necessary for the maintenance and proper functioning of the Perfect Commonwealth. For Hume, as we have said, habit reforms the mind, introducing in it "good dispositions and inclinations" (Essays 170). For us here, the "good dispositions and inclinations" are those which are consistent with well-contrived republicanism. These "good dispositions and inclinations" will be introduced into the public realm by means of repeated experience of the state's new constitutional arrangements. It is repeated experience of this sort which will render these dispositions and inclinations habitual to the people and as a result transform them into good members of the Perfect Commonwealth, people who can function well (politically) under their new well-contrived republican system of government.

B.

As we have already noted, Hume is convinced that no form of government is immortal (Essays 51; Essays 528-29). Thus, a second way he thinks

the Perfect Commonwealth might be established is by the "dissolution" of the existing government (Essays 513). Since we in this thesis are focusing on the establishment of the Perfect Commonwealth in Britain, the question for us is, How, according to Hume, might the current British government be dissolved? We have already seen that, according to Hume, the British constitution is unstable and might collapse as a result of either its Monarchical or its defective and self-interested Republican element gaining complete ascendancy thus transforming Britain into either an absolute monarchy or a (badly-contrived) republic. We have also seen his view that the standing army might be the cause of the constitution's destruction, turning Britain into a military despotism. Finally we should note Hume's view that if the practice of public credit is not halted, then the constitution will perish. For the rise of the debt can only lead to the rise of the stockholders who will destroy the "middle power" between the king and the people and, as a result, "a grievous despotism must infallibly prevail" in Britain (Essays 358). "It must, indeed, be one of these two events; either the nation must destroy public credit, or public credit will destroy the nation" (Essays 360-61). The next question is how the Perfect Commonwealth will arise out of any of these "deaths" of the current British constitution. Hume does not say, but it seems that the only answer to this question can be, Revolution.

Now, Hume must think that if any of these "deaths" of the British constitution were to eventuate, Britain would be left with a form of government significantly inferior to its present free limited monarchy. For, as we have seen, he sees neither absolute monarchy, nor despotism, as serving the public good as well as limited monarchy. Thus, on the basis of what was said in Chapters 4 and 5, it seems clear that, if the

current British constitution were to dissolve in one of the above-mentioned ways, then the British public would seek to overthrow the new pernicious government and return to the one it knew and loved, for it served the public good better. However, Hume thinks that, on its own, the public would be unable to achieve such a task. For, "the insurrections of the populace, when not raised and supported by persons of higher quality, are the least to be dreaded" (H 2 293), "dreaded", that is, by the existing rulers who are the object of the public's outrage and discontent. Thus, if the public is to succeed in returning to limited monarchy by overthrowing the existing pernicious form of government, then it must be led by people of "higher quality", that is, by those people regarded by the public as their natural leaders.

But will these leaders agree to take the public back to the form of government it knew? There is always the possibility that the "men of quality" will instead decide to steer their followers to the well-contrived republic of the Perfect Commonwealth. In such a case the leaders, having read Hume and therefore wanting to guide the people like "rational creatures" rather than force them ahead like "beasts", will make their plan known to the public, pointing out the advantages of the Perfect Commonwealth over the British limited monarchy, its greater public utility, and making clear to the people the political similarities between these two types of government and their almost indistinguishable economic and social effects i.e showing the people the conservative/radical nature of the Perfect Commonwealth. There is no guarantee that the people will be convinced by all this, in which case the leaders will have to guide them back to limited monarchy. But given the power of imitation and the place that the leaders hold in the eyes of the people, and given the nature of the Perfect Commonwealth,

its closeness to, and greater public utility than, limited monarchy, it is likely that the people will agree to be led to well-contrived republicanism. In this way, then, through revolution, the Perfect Commonwealth will arise.

The people, who are used to living under a free government, will find the new government familiar. They will recognise its "pillars". They will be able to retain their habitual economic and social practices and beliefs and those political habits necessary to operate under a free government. However, as in the possible introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth by means of the reformation of the current constitution by progressive politicians, in this current case too the people will lack both the necessary habits of allegiance and the political habits necessary to function under a well-contrived republic. The latter habits, we can assume, will be introduced in the same way as they were in A above. But what about the new habits of allegiance? Here we do not face the same problems that we faced in possibility A above. For here, the public is turning its back on a pernicious form of government, a government which does not serve the public good, and therefore, does not command the allegiance of the public. Thus, on the basis of what was said in Chapters 4 and 5, we can say that the public's habits of allegiance to the existing government will be weak, if not non-existent. Thus, it will be easy for the public to develop new habits of allegiance to the new form of government. And these habits will develop in the same way as in case A above (though with none of the difficulties experienced in that case), by means of education by the politicians (through repeated experience of new and better laws and institutions) and by means of imitating the leaders of society.

C.

There is one final way in which Hume thinks that the Perfect Commonwealth might come into being, namely, by establishing a settlement in a new, distant, land.⁵ Of course, in this thesis, we are concerned solely with the establishment of the Perfect Commonwealth in Britain. Thus, this possible way in which the Perfect Commonwealth might come into being is not important for us. However, a brief investigation is still necessary in order to complete our discussion on this subject.

Why does Hume leave room for the establishment of the Perfect Commonwealth as a settlement in a "distant" land? Probably because he feels that there is a possibility that the Perfect Commonwealth might never be established in Britain. In this case, those who have read "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" and found it attractive, will have to leave Britain in order to realise their dream of living in the Perfect Commonwealth. Will this Commonwealth be a colony ruled from London? No. For, firstly, Hume thinks that free governments (including, of course, the British limited monarchy) make bad colonial rulers: "Compare the Pais conquis of FRANCE with IRELAND, and you will be convinced of this truth...CORSICA [ruled by the republic of Genoa till 1768] is an obvious instance to the same purpose" (Essays 21). Thus, the Perfect Commonwealth ruled as a colony would be anything but perfect. Second, Hume thinks that it is impossible for a nation (regardless of its form of government) to maintain a colony with a free form of government. Thus, if Britain wants to hold on to America she must "annul all the Charters; abolish every democratical power in every Colony; repeal the Habeas Corpus Act with regard to them; invest every Governor with full discretionary or arbitrary Power; confiscate the

Estates of all the chief Planters; and hang three fourths of their Clergy" (L II 300-01). Clearly, then, a colony with a republican constitution ruled from London is out of the question. Thus, if the Perfect Commonwealth is to be established by means of a "combination of men" settling "in some distant part of the world" the settlement must be independent of the mother country. But here we should note Hume's view that such independence is difficult to achieve:

A company of men, who should leave their native country, in order to people some uninhabited region, might dream of recovering their native freedom; but they would soon find, that their prince still laid claim to them, and called them his subjects, even in their new settlement. And in this he would but act conformably to the common ideas of mankind (Essays 476).

The inhabitants of the new settlement will find it difficult to assert their independence. Unfortunately, Hume does not tell us how they will succeed in asserting their independence.

What can we say about the subjects of this independent settlement? Not much, but three things can be said with certainty:

- (i) They are people who are unhappy with the British political system and unhappy that the Perfect Commonwealth will never be established in that country (for otherwise they would never have left Britain);
- (ii) They are people who have all the mental and behavioural characteristics and qualities of eighteenth century Britons. For according to Hume, "[t]he same set of manners will follow a nation, and adhere to them all over the whole globe...The SPANISH, ENGLISH, FRENCH and DUTCH colonies are all distinguishable even between the tropics" (Essays

205). Of course, we here are dealing with an independent settlement, not a colony. But we can assume, in this case, that what is true of colonies is also true of independent settlements.

(iii) No doubt, the settlers will have familiarised themselves with the nature of the Perfect Commonwealth before going off to join it as an independent settlement "in some distant land". Thus, these settlers will know what to expect, namely, a settlement which is not radically different (economically, socially, politically) from the nation they are leaving. Thus, in leaving Britain to join the new well-contrived republican settlement, these people will be able to keep many of the economic, social, and political habits they acquired while living under the British limited monarchy. They will not have to reform themselves, or be reformed, in any radical manner. And, they will know all this. Given the significant similarities between limited monarchies and (well-contrived) republics, the economic, social, and political character of the new independent settlement will be familiar to the new inhabitants. And this of course will make it easier for them to embrace their new home. They will recognise the new settlement and not see it as something alien. They will feel comfortable, and be able to function well, within its boundaries.

These new settlers will have leaders. Who will these leaders be? Probably men who in Britain were members of the "governing part of the nation", that is, men who are naturally imitated by the public. Like the people they are governing, they too will be dissatisfied with the the British political system and unhappy that the Perfect Commonwealth will not be established in their country. But these men will not only be the independent settlement's leaders. They will also be its founders and like all "founders of states" their job will be to

"transmit a system of [constitutional] laws and institutions to secure the peace, happiness, and liberty of future generations" (Essays 54). They will find the necessary constitutional laws and institutions in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth".

According to Rousseau, "[o]ne who dares to undertake the founding of a people, should feel that he is capable of changing human nature."⁶ But Hume would disagree, for as we have seen he thinks that human nature cannot and should not be changed. Rather, "the common bent of mankind" ought to be respected and given "all the improvements of which it is susceptible" (Essays 260). And if what we said in Chapter 6 is correct, then, according to Hume, the "founders" will establish a state (i.e the Perfect Commonwealth) which is in harmony with the course of nature.⁷

These leaders and founders of the Perfect Commonwealth will also have the task of instilling in their subjects (i) the political habits necessary to operate well under a well-contrived republic, and (ii) the necessary habits of allegiance. (i) will be achieved in the same way as in possibilities A and B above. As for (ii), it is clear that, as in B above, here too the problems met by the reformist politicians in possibility A, will be absent. For, we can assume that the settlers left a government to which they were not intimately attached. Thus, their habits of allegiance to the old government will be weak. As a result, the new habits of allegiance will develop easily and quickly. These habits will be instilled in the same way as in B above.

There is one final issue that must be tackled here. We are dealing with the establishment of the Perfect Commonwealth as an independent settlement "in some distant land". No doubt, this distant land will be inhabited by indigenous persons or natives. Will these natives form

part of the new settlement? One possible way in which they might do so is as slaves. But, for Hume, slavery is unacceptable. It is "cruel and oppressive" and therefore harmful to the enslaved (Essays 383). But at the same time it is also harmful to the enslaver, who ends up with "little humanity" (Essays 383) and with all the nasty qualities of a "petty tyrant" (Essays 384). Where a society practices slavery, those "of condition", that is, those of superior social rank, "are only qualified to be, themselves, slaves and tyrants; and in every future intercourse, either with their inferiors or their superiors, are apt to forget the natural equality of mankind" (Essays 185). And here we should recall the important socio-political role that Hume assigns to men of superior rank. He seems to think that the institution of slavery corrupts this role. Further, Hume is convinced that slavery has an adverse effect upon the "populousness" of a nation. Hume accepts the established idea of the time that "wherever there are most happiness and virtue, and the wisest institutions, there will also be most people" (Essays 382).⁸ Since slavery does harm to the size of a nation's population (Essays 386-89), it follows that this practice detracts from a nation's virtue, happiness, and institutional wisdom: "[S]lavery is in general disadvantageous both to the happiness and populousness of mankind" (Essays 396). For all these reasons, then, "[t]he remains which are found of domestic slavery, in the AMERICAN colonies, and among some EUROPEAN nations, would never surely create a desire of rendering it more universal" (Essays 383). We can say, therefore, that the Perfect Commonwealth as an independent settlement, will not include indigenous persons, or any other persons for that matter, as slaves.

But there is a second way in which indigenous persons might form part

of the Perfect Commonwealth, namely, as members of this state on the same footing as those from the mother country. But it is unlikely that Hume would find such an idea acceptable. For according to Hume "society...supposes a degree of equality" among its members, an equality of "body and mind" which will allow these members to participate in the rules of justice (E II 190). However, Hume thinks that non-whites are "naturally inferior to the whites" in the arts and the sciences i.e they have inferior minds (Essays 208 fn. 10; Essays 629 note i). Given the intellectual "inferiority" of non-whites, and their consequent inability to participate in the fundamental rules of society, it follows that, for Hume, indigenous persons will not form part of the Perfect Commonwealth as members. Importantly, however, neither will they form part of the Commonwealth as slaves, in spite of their (supposed) inferiority. They will be left alone, outside the "walls" of the Perfect Commonwealth.⁹

II

In this thesis we have limited ourselves to showing that Hume's Perfect Commonwealth ought to be taken seriously in the case of Britain. I think we have achieved this task. But did Hume himself intend such a limitation? Did Hume write this essay with only the British public in mind? I want to end this chapter, and therefore this thesis, by investigating this question, and by revealing what we might call "Hume's Dream".

Does Hume see the recommendations outlined in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" as applying exclusively to Britain? No. There can be no doubt about this. For he tells us that the Perfect Commonwealth might

be erected either "by a dissolution of some old government", or by reforming "any real constitution or form of government" (Essays 513; my emphases). Thus, he makes room for the possibility that "the country, proposed to be erected into a commonwealth...[might] be of more narrow extent...[or] of greater extent" than Britain (Essays 516). Clearly, then, Hume does not confine the erection of the Perfect Commonwealth to Britain alone. However, given that he is a conservative/radical reformer, we can take it that he does confine this erection to that handful of European nations of his time which (according to him) are ruled by free governments.¹⁰ For, like Britain, only such nations will already have in place the structures necessary to implement the recommendations outlined in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" in a conservative/radical manner. Hume is a conservative/radical reformer. Therefore, we can assume that he does not want to see his recommendations embraced by a nation which would have to undergo radical and wholesale reform in order to put these into practice. Does this mean that, for Hume, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is to have no influence at all on those states of Europe which are under the control of absolute rulers? Given that Hume is not a radical reformer, does it follow that he does not want "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" to have a practical impact on what we might call "Monarchical Europe"? Yes and No. Let me explain.

According to Hume, "EUROPE [today] is shared out mostly into great monarchies; and such parts of it as are divided into small territories, are commonly governed by absolute princes, who ruin their people by a mimicry of the greater monarchs" (Essays 402).¹¹ Clearly, no attempt should be made to erect the Perfect Commonwealth in these states. For the transformation of a state from absolutism to well-contrived

republicanism is too radical. It would require massive reorganisation at all levels. But there is no room for such reorganisation in Hume's thought. Thus, we can take it that Hume did not write "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" with an eye on Monarchical Europe. However, this is not the end of the story. For there is always the possibility that, sometime in the future, the states of Monarchical Europe will find themselves in a position to erect the Perfect Commonwealth. This may happen in one of two ways.

(i) We have already noted Hume's view that, after witnessing the prosperity of neighbouring republics and emulating these republics, "barbarous" monarchies transformed themselves into "civilised" monarchies. We have also noted Hume's view that the modern well-contrived republics of Europe are superior to and more advantageous than their neighbouring absolute monarchies. Given this, and given the power of emulation, there is always the possibility that Europe's absolute monarchies will move closer and closer to free government (or even to well-contrived republicanism). Once this happens, then clearly these states will be in a position to adopt Hume's constitutional arrangements in a conservative/radical fashion.

(ii) For Hume, economic, social, and political elements are intertwined as causes and effects. Thus, commerce gives rise to industry and luxury, improves the conditions of the poor and creates in a state "the middling rank" who seek the establishment of free government. Free government in turn strengthens the position of the middle rank, enforces justice effectively, ensures the prosperity of the people and promises strong commercial and manufacturing sectors. Now, as we saw in Chapter 2 Hume calls on France, Spain, Germany etc to adopt a policy of free trade (Essays 331). In other words, Hume recommends that these

absolutist states strengthen their commercial sectors. The political effect of doing such a thing would be the evolution of free government in these states. Thus, if the absolute monarchies and principalities of Europe pay heed to Hume's advice, then one day they will be in a position to transform their states into Perfect Commonwealths.

In short, while at present "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is not aimed at Monarchical Europe, this might change in the future.

Hume is saddened by the fact that in modern Europe "the situation... with regard to civil liberty [the rule of law], as well as equality of fortune [equality of property in the sense that all ought to be allowed to enjoy the fruits of their labour (Essays 265) i.e the effective enforcement of justice], is not near so favourable, either to the propagation or happiness of mankind" (Essays 402; my emphasis). As we saw in Chapter 2, happiness, for Hume, is intertwined with luxury and, thus, with commerce, industry, and manufacturing. And since these are best encouraged under a free government (where the rule of law and the natural rules of justice are best enforced) it follows that, for Hume, man's happiness is best secured under a free government. Given this, and given that Hume takes his Perfect Commonwealth to be the best form of free government, we can say that, for Hume, the Perfect Commonwealth is best able to give man the happiness he deserves. Further, Hume thinks that the propagation of a nation's population depends upon "happiness and virtue, and the wisest institutions" (Essays 382), and I think we can safely say the greatest happiness and virtue, along with the wisest institutions, are (in Hume's opinion) to be found in the Perfect Commonwealth. Given all this, and given Hume's criticism of the economic, social, and political situation that currently exists in most European nations (quoted above at Essays 402), we can say that

"Hume's Dream" is that one day all the nations of Europe will achieve possession of governments which (a) PERFECTLY incorporate the principle of the rule of law, (b) PERFECTLY enforce the rules of justice, (c) PERFECTLY acquire for their societies strong commercial and manufacturing sectors, and (d) PERFECTLY secure for their people safe, happy, and prosperous lives. In other words, "Hume's Dream" is that one day the nations of Europe will acquire, not just free government, but the best type of free government, that outlined in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". And such a situation, no doubt, would be in Britain's greatest interest. For once the nations of Europe transform themselves into Perfect Commonwealths they will prosper. And given that, according to Hume, a nation's prosperity depends heavily on the prosperity of her neighbours (as we saw in Chapter 2), we can say that once the nations of Europe begin to thrive under their new well-contrived republican constitutions, Britain will reap great benefits.

But for all this to happen and for "Hume's Dream" to become a reality, the handful of European nations which are at present capable of erecting the Perfect Commonwealth in a conservative/radical manner, must do so, while the nations of Monarchical Europe must somehow come to acquire the political, social, and economic structures of free government. For only then will they be fit to make the jump to the Perfect Commonwealth in a conservative/radical manner. Hume would never allow or encourage these absolutist nations to directly implement the recommendations outlined in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth". Such a thing would be too radical. But Hume is no radical. He is a conservative/radical reformer, and "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is a conservative/radical reform.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. This is not to say that Hume wrote "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" with only the British public in mind. As we shall see in Chapter 8, he did not. However, despite the fact that Hume did not intend to limit the practical impact of "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" to Britain alone, we in this thesis will impose such a limitation, due to a lack of space. Thus, in most of this thesis, all questions regarding "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" will be raised only in relation to Britain. I say "most" because in Chapter 8, section II we will very briefly touch upon the question of the practical impact of "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" on the other countries of Europe.

2. Plamenatz, John, Man and Society (2 Volumes), London: Longman, 1963, vol. 1 pp 330-31 (hereafter cited as Plamenatz, Man and Society); Robertson, John, "The Scottish Enlightenment at the Limits of the Civic Tradition" in Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment, edited by Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp 137-78. See pp 169-74 (hereafter cited as Robertson, "The Scottish Enlightenment at the Limits of the Civic Tradition" in Wealth and Virtue); Stewart, John B., Opinion and Reform in Hume's Political Philosophy, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, pp 281-90 (hereafter cited as Stewart, Opinion and Reform) .

Here we should note that, at first sight, it might seem that Plamenatz does not take "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously. For he thinks that "Hume did not in fact want great changes made in England" (p 330), and he calls this essay "deliberately Utopian" (p 330), the product of a man who "amused himself by devising an ideal system of government" (p 331), and by "speculating on what is ideally the best" (p 330). However, at the same time, Plamenatz tells us that, according to Hume, it is beneficial for us to reflect on what is the best, "for we can then strive to bring what exists, gradually and gently, nearer to our ideal" (p 330), and that "Hume, for all his conservatism, did not think it altogether

- unreasonable for men to attempt great though gradual changes in their form of government to bring it closer to their ideals" (p 331). Given these latter views, and given, as we shall see later in the "Introduction" (and as comes out in the quote immediately above), that Plamenatz ascribes to Hume a form of non-conservative reformism, it seems safe to conclude that he thinks that "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" ought to be taken seriously.
3. Letwin, Shirley. R., The Pursuit of Certainty, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965, p 89 (hereafter cited as Letwin, The Pursuit of Certainty). James Harrington (1611-77) gave the world his model of the perfect government in his Commonwealth of Oceana (1656). Hume refers to this model in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" (Essays 514-16; Essays 523).
 4. Miller, David, Philosophy and Ideology in Hume's Political Thought, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981, p 77 (hereafter cited as Miller, Philosophy and Ideology).
 5. Whelan, Frederick. G., Order and Artifice in Hume's Political Philosophy, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, p 342 (hereafter cited as Whelan, Order and Artifice).
 6. Baier, Annette, A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991, p 268 (hereafter cited as Baier, A Progress of Sentiments).
 7. In Chapter 7 we shall examine the ideas and positions these scholars attribute to Hume which have the consequence of preventing us from taking "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously.
 8. Assuming, of course, that Hume was not an idiot and did not advocate reforms of a non-conservative type, while embracing a form of conservative reformism. We shall make this assumption (i.e that Hume was not a simpleton) throughout this thesis. I think that the reader will not object to my making this assumption, regardless of what he or she might think of Hume and his philosophy.

9. Mill, John Stuart, "Bentham" in Essays on Ethics, Religion, and Society, edited by J. M. Robson, vol. 10 of Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press and Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, p 80.
10. Stephan, Leslie, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1962, vol. 2, p 157.
11. Letwin, The Pursuit of Certainty, p 89; p 90.
12. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 97; p 119; p 145. Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 332 fn. 55; p 335; p 349; p 364; p 367; p 370-71.
13. Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 316; p 349; p 367.
14. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 119; p 145; p 191.

Here we should note that two less important thinkers in the area of Hume's political thought (less important, that is, than Miller and Whelan) also take Hume to be a conservative reformer, namely, Wolin, Sheldon S., "Hume and Conservatism" in Hume: A Re-evaluation edited by D. W Livingston and J. T. King, New York: Fordham University Press, 1976, pp 239-56 (hereafter cited as Wolin, "Hume and Conservatism" in Hume: A Re-evaluation); and Livingston, Donald W., Hume's Philosophy of Common Life, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984 (hereafter cited as Livingston, Hume's Philosophy of Common Life).

While Wolin does not explicitly classify Hume as a conservative reformer, and while he thinks that Hume had a "conservative distrust of reform" (p 244), he also thinks that Hume was "sceptical of man's ability to effect reforms which would be both widesweeping and beneficial" (p 248; my emphasis), thus leaving open the possibility that Hume allowed reforms which were piecemeal and beneficial i.e conservative reforms. And, importantly, nothing that Wolin tells us in his paper prevents us from ascribing such a position to him with respect to Hume.

Unlike Wolin, Livingston explicitly tells us that Hume held a "conservative theory of reform" (p 341). For Hume, we are told,

"society is a sacred order" (p 340) and "[the] established order has a sacred character" (p 330). Thus, quoting from "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth", Livingston tells us that, for Hume, "we ...should attempt only those reforms...that are in accord with 'the chief pillars of the [established] constitution' (Essays 499)" (p 341). In Chapter 6 we shall see that this passage from "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" (a passage very popular among those who take Hume to be a conservative reformer) cannot be used as evidence to support the claim that Hume was a conservative reformer.

15. That Whelan thinks that, for Hume, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" is a radical reform is clear from the fact that he touches upon this essay during a discussion of political radicalism. Whelan, Order and Artifice, pp 341-44. That Miller holds the same view is clear given that he thinks that, for Hume, the establishment of a republican constitution (in a nation without such a constitution) would require starting "from scratch". Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 159.
16. Plamenatz, Man and Society, p 330; p 331; p 330. Here we should note that Plamenatz's idea that, for Hume, reforms ought to be introduced gradually, slowly, and cautiously, is not inconsistent with the claim we have made that he takes Hume to be a non-conservative reformer. For non-conservative reformism (as I understand it) has nothing to do with the way in which reforms are introduced, but with the extent of such reforms. And, as we have seen (note 2 above), it is clear that, for Plamenatz, Hume was willing to advocate reforms which deviated significantly from what the public was used to, and thus, was a non-conservative reformer.
17. Robertson, "The Scottish Enlightenment at the Limits of the Civic Tradition" in Wealth and Virtue, p 169. Like Plamenatz, Robertson sees Hume as an advocate of gradual reform. However, as we noted above (note 16), the gradual introduction of reforms is consistent with non-conservative reformism. Thus, the fact that, for Robertson, Hume thinks that reforms ought to be introduced slowly should not be seen as evidence that we are wrong in classifying him

as one who takes Hume to be a non-conservative reformer.

18. For a change in form of government involves a significant change in both the established principles of the polity and the practices, beliefs and institutions founded upon such principles. Further, as we shall see later (and as Robertson is well aware), for Hume, political causes have social and economic effects. Thus, in Hume's view, any significant change in a nation's political principles must bring a similar change in its social and economic realms.
19. Laursen, John Christian, The Politics of Skepticism in the Ancients, Montaigne, Hume and Kant, New York: E. J. Brill, 1992, p 167; p 187 fn. 29 (hereafter cited as Laursen, The Politics of Skepticism).
20. Laursen does make a number of brief but important points on the subject of "Hume the (non-conservative) reformer", and I shall make use of these in this thesis. Unfortunately, Laursen does not tell us anything about the status of "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" in Hume's thought. We cannot assume that he thinks that this essay should be taken seriously just because he classifies Hume as a non-conservative reformer. For, as we shall see, showing that this essay ought to be taken seriously involves a lot more than merely holding that Hume was a non-conservative reformer.
21. Stewart, Opinion and Reform, pp 6-9, and Chapters 5 and 6 passim.
22. Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 181.
23. Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 210; p 211.
24. Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 213. As noted above (notes 16 and 17 above) the slow and careful introduction of reforms is consistent with non-conservative reformism.
25. Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 321; p 158 (Whelan's brackets).

26. Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 60; p 61; p 65.
27. Hume scholars do not agree on the question of the authorship of An Abstract of a Treatise of Human nature. I agree with those who attribute authorship to Hume e.g J. M Keynes and P. Sraffa in their edition of the Abstract (An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature: A Pamphlet hitherto unknown by David Hume, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938). See "Introduction", pp v-xxxi; Broome, Jeff, "On the Authorship of the Abstract: A Reply to John O. Nelson", Hume Studies, vol. 18, no. 1, 1992, 95-104; Norton, David Fate, "More Evidence that Hume Wrote the Abstract", Hume Studies, vol. 19, no. 1, 1993, 217-22.
28. Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 122. Whelan thinks that, in the end, Hume's "conservative outlook...is firmly grounded in his philosophical skepticism" (Order and Artifice, p 322). In Chapter 3 we shall see that Hume's scepticism does not have conservative consequences.

Here we should note that in Philosophy and Ideology Miller argues in a way similar to Whelan. According to Miller, Hume's scepticism involves (among other things), recognising that "it is folly to resist natural necessity" (p 36), and that we ought to acquiesce in the natural. (For a full statement by Miller of Hume's scepticism see pp 34-35). And what is natural? What does nature teach? Among other things, that "[m]ost of our beliefs are incapable of being justified by reason, but they result from the natural workings of the imagination [i.e custom] and must therefore be taken as given" (p 95). Miller goes on to say that, for Hume, some improvement in our beliefs is possible, but even here "[w]e are in no way escaping from the reign of custom" (p 38). "[S]uch improvement...[does not] consist in replacing non-rational judgement by rational judgement. Improvement can only take place within the limits set by the natural workings of the imagination [i.e custom]" (p 39). Thus, "[i]mprovement...is limited..by the natural boundaries of the imagination" (p 77), so that in all areas of life we must "accept human judgement at face value, as non-rational and corrigible only to a small degree" (p 191). Here Miller is telling us, not only

how things are for Hume, but also how they ought to be. Improvement ought only to take place on the basis of past experience (and therefore is very limited). For the only other alternative to improving belief on the basis of custom is improvement on the basis of a priori reason. But improvement on this basis is destructive (p 96). For Hume, then, custom ought to be our guide of life.

As we have seen, both Whelan and Miller hold that, according to Hume, our choice of guides is limited to either reason or custom. Livingston, in Hume's Philosophy of Common Life, holds the same view (though he uses a different language). According to Livingston, for Hume "[t]he standards [of reform] must be either abstract tenseless standards [grounded in the "autonomy principle" i.e. reason alone] or concrete narrative standards [grounded in the "historical order"]" (p 335). Use of the former standard leads to "the violent intrusion of rationalistic metaphysics into politics" (p 308), while use of the latter leads to a "conservative theory of reform", a theory "squarely in the classical skeptical tradition" (p 341).

29. Whelan, Order and Artifice, pp 129-30; p 356.
30. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, pp 113-114.
31. According to Whelan (Order and Artifice), Hume ascribes to humans, a "basic affinity for...order" (p 356) and regards "stability and uniformity...as the predominant inclination of our nature" (p 335). For Hume, Whelan tells us, "order...[is] a fundamental desideratum of human life" (p 306). As a result of this desire for stability, the Humean individual "experience[s] uneasiness in the face of any abrupt disturbance in regular and habitual patterns of expectation" (p 157). In other words, given his love of order, the Humean individual fears the new and novel.
32. While both Whelan and Miller recognise that the Humean individual's desire for a good reputation causes him to conform to the moral and political standards of society (Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 177; Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 115), both fail to see the

strong conservative consequences of this desire. We shall examine these in Chapter 4.

33. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 119.
34. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 114.
35. Berry, Christopher J., Hume, Hegel and Human Nature, The Hauge: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982, p 79 (hereafter cited as Berry, Hume, Hegel and Human Nature).
36. Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 331; p 371.
37. Whelan, Order and Artifice, pp 338-39.
38. Haakonssen, Knud, "The Structure of Hume's Political Theory" in The Cambridge Companion to Hume, edited by David Fate Norton, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p 196; p 197 (hereafter cited as Haakonssen, "The Structure of Hume's Political Theory" in The Cambridge Companion to Hume).
39. Norton, David Fate, "An Introduction To Hume's Thought" in The Cambridge Companion to Hume, edited by David Fate Norton, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p 24. Norton does not tell us what type of reformer he takes Hume to be.

CHAPTER 1

1. In the "Introduction" we saw that many important Hume scholars today take Hume to be a reformer (either conservative or non-conservative). Thus, the task of proving that Hume was a reformer is not a pressing one. However, I still want to embark upon this task, for doing so we will reveal a number of ideas in Hume's thought which are important for this thesis as a whole (e.g Hume's mitigated scepticism, his experimental method of reasoning, his view that reformers ought to pay heed to the natural etc).

2. According to Whelan, Hume "clearly has positive doctrines to advance, doctrines both scientific and moral...Like the other prominent philosophers of the Enlightenment, Hume assumes the role of a teacher of the public." Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 295. See also Phillipson, Nicholas, Hume, London: Wiefenfield and Nicholson, 1989, p 2; p 9; p 28; p 53; p 55; pp 76-77 (hereafter cited as Phillipson, Hume).
3. "[Hume's] concern with questions of style and presentation show him to have been interested in being widely heard and correctly understood." Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 295.
4. The Advertisement to the Essays is not reprinted in the edition of this work used in this thesis. See instead, David Hume: The Philosophical Works, edited by T. H Green and T. H Groose, 4 Volumes, London: Longman, 1882 (reprint, Darmstadt: Scienia Verlag Aalen, 1964), vol 3, p 41.
5. Stroud, Barry, Hume, London: Routledge and Kegan, 1977, p 4. See also Mackie, John, Hume's Moral Theory, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, pp 5-6.
6. Again and again, Whelan brings out the prescriptive side of Hume's writings. See Whelan, Order and Artifice, Index under "normative doctrines (Hume)". I do not always agree with the normative prescriptions that Whelan ascribes to Hume.
7. As we shall see later in this thesis, Hume founds moral distinctions upon certain sentiments of human nature. But how can Hume do such a thing given that, in his famous "is/ought" passage (T 469-70), he himself recognises the invalidity of deriving values from facts? Is Hume violateing his own law? No. As Whelan notes, in the above mentioned passage "Hume calls into question only the logical cogency" of deriving an "ought" from an "is". He does not question "the propriety [of such a derivation] as a considered act of philosophical choice....[Hume] deliberately acquiesces for practical purposes in what he takes to be his (and other people's)

most basic and trustworthy feelings and mental dispositions." Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 306. See also Kemp, J., Ethical Naturalism: Hobbes and Hume, London: Macmillan, 1970, pp 46-47.

8. As suggested by Haakonssen, "The Structure of Hume's Political Theory" in The Cambridge Companion to Hume, p 183.
9. Given its emphasis on liberty, Haakonssen takes Social Contractarianism to be enthusiastic for Hume. Haakonssen, "The Structure of Hume's Political Thought" in The Cambridge Companion to Hume, p 183.

Here we should note that, while it is true that for Hume the consequences of enthusiasm are on the whole pernicious, it is also true that he welcomes one of its consequences (when not carried to extremes), namely, its promotion of liberty. Thus, "the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution" to the Puritans (H 4 146), and, in France today, "the jansenists preserve alive the small sparks of the love of liberty" (Essays 79). It is also true that, according to Hume, the "fury" of enthusiasm wanes "in a little time" (Essays 77).

10. This idea is developed carefully by Whelan, Order and Artifice, 143-47. See also Immerwahr, John, "Hume on Tranquillizing the Passions", Hume Studies, vol. 18, no. 2, 1992, pp 293-314.
11. For a fuller account of this difference see Immerwahr, John, "The Anatomist and the Painter: The Continuity of Hume's Treatise and Essays", Hume Studies, vol. 17, no. 1, 1991, pp 1-14, esp. pp 4-6.
12. In Chapter 5 we shall see that the rules of justice play a significant role in Hume's thought, and that Hume labels these rules "Laws of Nature". These laws, we are told, are uniform and constant at all times and under all circumstances, and are founded on human nature. Thus, the question of the uniformity and constancy of human nature is of great significance for Hume, given, as we shall see, the fundamental importance of justice in his thought.

Here we should note that scholars disagree about Hume's position

regarding the uniformity and constancy of human nature. On the one hand, there are those who argue that, while Hume does talk about the uniformity of human nature, at the same time he thinks that the contents of this nature is diverse and flexible, affected by historical and social circumstances. Thus, Forbes tells us that, for Hume, "[t]he universal principles [of human nature] are to be regarded as abstractions from the concrete variety of human (=social) experience", but that "the content of mind...is various and supplied by social and historical circumstances." (Forbes, Duncan, Hume's Philosophical Politics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p 119 . Hereafter cited as Forbes, Hume's Philosophical Politics.) Miller thinks that "Hume saw socially derived characteristics as overlaying the basic and uniform traits of human nature." According to Miller, while "Hume does...believe that there is some uniformity among human beings...[such as] the same underlying moral sentiments...[and] some similarity in motivation", he also thinks that "men are powerfully affected by the manners and customs of their age, by their education and social position, and by individual differences of temperament." Thus, for Hume, there are a variety of "sources of variation in human nature." (Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 121; pp 102-03). Richard Dees thinks that, for Hume, "the structure of human motivations remains the same, even when the content of those motivations is quite different" Drawing from Wertz, S. K., "Hume, History, and Human Nature", Journal of the History of Ideas, 36, 1975, pp 481-96, Dees tells us that, for Hume, human nature is uniform only in a "methodological" sense. That is, for Hume, "we must assume that...[people] have certain biological needs...[and] certain minimum requirements of rationality...But such requirements are rather weak; they do presuppose little content to...[people's] behaviour (Dees, Richard, "Hume and the Contexts of Politics", Journal of the History of Philosophy, 30, 1992, pp 219-42; p 227; p 227).

On the other hand, Berry ascribes a different position to Hume. While he thinks that, for Hume, "[the] principles, operations and springs...in human nature are abstract", he claims that they are abstract only "in the sense of pertaining regardless of specific context", and quickly adds that "this does not mean that what Hume,

in fact, regards as constant is devoid of content." Rather, after drawing up a list of attributes which Hume takes to be constant constituents of human nature Berry concludes that "Hume's delineation of the content, of what is constant in human nature, is extensive and reveals that human nature for him is no mere residual cipher" (Berry, Hume, Hegel and Human Nature, p 63; pp 61-62; p 63). According to Berry, then, Hume's view is that human nature is uniform and constant, not merely in structure, but in content. I agree with Berry. Others who ascribe a similar position of "substantive uniformity of human nature" to Hume include: Mackie, John L., Hume's Moral Theory, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, p 152; Norton, David Fate, David Hume: Common-Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, p 136n (hereafter cited as Norton, David Hume: Common-Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician); Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 218 fn. 23).

13. By "moral subjects" Hume means all those subjects which fall under "the science of human nature" (E I 5), that is, "everything distinctively human" including "human thought, action, feelings, perceptions, passions and language." Stroud, Hume, London: Routledge and Kegan, 1977, p 2.

CHAPTER 2

1. Thus Hume would not have agreed with the judgement of his friend Rousseau that the British constitution is "a model of the proper balance of the respective powers." Rousseau, J.J., Lettres Ecrites de la Montagne, in Oeuvres Complètes, edited by B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-69, Vol. 3, p 874 (my translation).
2. In fact Hume thinks that "a man...without public spirit, or a regard to the community, is deficient in the most material part of virtue" (Essays 27).

3. Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 236.

4. While Hume demands that constitutions which embrace the principle of the division of powers also embrace the principle of the balance of powers (checks and controls, so as not to allow any single power to swamp the others and rule in its own interest), his friend Rousseau does not. Thus, in Social Contract, while Rousseau tells us that "one who has authority over men should not have authority over laws, [and] one who has authority over laws should also not have authority over men." (Rousseau, J. J., On the Social Contract, in On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy, translated by Judith Masters and edited by Roger Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978, p 68), the title of Chapter 2, Book 2 of that same work announces that "Sovereignty is Indivisible", for, as Rousseau says elsewhere: "It is of the essence of the sovereign power not to be able to be limited: it can do everything, or it is nothing". Rousseau, J.J., Lettres Ecrites de la Montagne, in Oeuvres Complètes, edited by B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-69, Vol. 3, p 826 (my translation). Of course, like Hume, Rousseau is aware of the dangers of self-interest in the political realm: "[N]othing is more dangerous than the influence of private interests on public affairs." Rousseau, J. J., On the Social Contract, in On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy, translated by Judith Masters and edited by Roger Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978, p 84. However, he still feels that it is safe to place absolute power in the hands of the sovereign, no doubt because he places sovereignty in the hands of the General Will, a will which always has the public interest at heart. In contrast, Hume has no device like the General Will, and so demands that when a constitution divides power among several bodies, it must also ensure that these bodies check one another. Thus, Hume's Perfect Commonwealth unites the principles of the separation and balance of powers (see Essays 517-22). As one scholar notes, in the Perfect Commonwealth "authority is widely distributed, and checks and balances abound." Baier, A Progress of Sentiments, p 267.

5. Williams, Basil, The Whig Supremacy: 1714-1760, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952, p 27 (hereafter cited as Williams, The Whig Supremacy).
6. Williams, The Whig Supremacy, p 26.
7. Miller notes: "The mechanism at work here is not explained, but one might look for it either in the inbuilt human propensity to compare oneself with others - so that each person naturally generates his own hierarchy of esteem - or in the more instrumental consideration that rank is necessary to social stability." Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, pp 133-34.
8. Miller stresses this "checking function" of men of high status in Hume's thought. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, pp 135-37.
9. "Exact numbers [of the Lords] for 1714, 1719, 1728 and 1759 were 213, 220, 221, and 214". Williams, The Whig Supremacy, p 22 fn. 1.
10. Williams, The Whig Supremacy, p 24.
11. For a brief but good discussion of this issue see Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, pp 163-67.
12. "Indeed one of Hume's main purposes was to show that the old division [between Whigs and Tories] had become irrelevant and should be replaced by a straightforward contest between Court and Country parties." Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 173.
13. In contrast, Rousseau calls for the elimination of all interest groups from society. True, he adds that where this is not possible, then "their numbers must be multiplied and their inequality prevented, as was done by Solon, Numa, and Servius." Rousseau, J. J., On the Social Contract, in On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy, translated by Judith Masters and edited by Roger Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978, pp 61-62. However, as his reference to Servius makes clear, what

Rousseau has in mind here is the creation of parties whose every aspect (e.g size, composition, role) is to be completely controlled by the legislator's law (p 116). Thus, unlike Hume, Rousseau does not think that any good can come from the free competition among rival interest groups.

14. According to Hume, philosophers ought to distance themselves from partisan political disputes: "It belongs, therefore, to a philosopher alone, who is of neither party, to put all the circumstances in the scale, and assign to each of them its proper poise and influence" (Essays 507).
15. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, pp 167-70. Phillipson, Hume, pp 76-91.
16. "On the Court side were the king and all those who controlled the chief institutions through which the power of the State was deployed: the Royal Household, the ministries, the armed forces, the Church, the 'City'. On the Country side were the elements of society who, for one reason or another, resisted the activities of the Court: gentlemen who objected to the interference of the Court in the way they ran their local communities as Justices of Peace; provincial business men envious of the privileges of the 'City'; dissenters from the doctrines and worship of the Church of England; and the freemen of the City of London, a powerful body of radicals almost permanently at odds with the financial magnates of the 'City', and thus usually in opposition to the Court." Williams, E. N., The Ancien Regime in Europe: Government and Society in the Major States 1648-1789, Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1972, p 504.
17. According to Hume, these parties "are the real causes of its [the constitution's] permanent life and vigour" (H 5 556), note J).
18. Importantly, this "chief support" (i.e parties of interest) of the British constitution will remain in the Perfect Commonwealth (though in a much improved form) (Essays 525), thus contributing to the non-radical introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into

Britian. We shall return to this point in Chapter 6.

19. We have already noted that the Perfect Commonwealth will contain parties of interest. Now, according to Hume, all governments must come to an end (Essays 51), and the Perfect Commonwealth is no exception (Essays 528-29). One way, Hume thinks, that his preferred form of government might collapse is if parties of interest are removed and, as a result "whimsical and unaccountable factions... arise, from personal favour and enmity" (Essays 529). This indicates that just as parties of interest are "[t]he chief support" of the existing British government (Essays 525), they will be a chief support of the government of the Perfect Commonwealth too.
20. Taylor, W. L., Francis Hutcheson and David Hume as Predecessors of Adam Smith, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1965, p 36.
21. For a full discussion of the economic reforms recommended by Hume, with emphasis on their progressive nature, see Stewart, Opinion and Reform, pp 257ff.
22. Sekora, John, Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollet, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1977, p 155.
23. Hume argues against the common opinion that luxury is "the source of every corruption in government, and the immediate cause of faction, sedition, civil wars, and the total loss of liberty" (E II 181). For an investigation of this common opinion in eighteenth century Britain see Sekora, John, Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollet, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1977, Chapters 2 and 3 passim.
24. On Hume's ideas about the positive consequences of commerce, luxury, and manufacturing see, Stewart, Opinion and Reform, pp 257-74, and Robinson, "The Scottish Enlightenment at the limits of the Civic Tradition", in Wealth and Virtue, pp 137-78, esp. pp 155-173. I have benefited from these discussions.

25. In contrast to Hume, Rousseau praises man's distant ancestors, calling the tribal stage "the best for man", "the happiest and most durable epoch", and "the veritable prime of the world", and referring to Rome as the "model of all free peoples." Rousseau, J. J., A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, in The First and Second Discourses, translated by Roger Masters and Judith Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964, p 151; p 80. At the same time, he glorifies Sparta as "a republic of demi-gods rather than men". Rousseau, J. J., A Discourse on the Arts and Sciences, in The First and Second Discourses, translated by Rodger Masters and Judith Masters, New York: St. Martins Press, 1964, p 43.
26. Rousseau too talks about the dangers of idleness. See Rousseau, J. J., Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre, translated by Allan Bloom, in Politics and the Arts, New York: Cornell University Press, 1968, p 126; and Considérations sur le Gouvernement de Pologne, in Oeuvres Complètes, edited by B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-69, Vol. 3, pp 957-58. However, it is clear that, for Rousseau, idleness is a danger only in the context of civil society. For elsewhere he says that "there is no original perversity in the human heart, and ...the first movements of nature are always right." Rousseau, J. J., Lettre à Christophe de Beaumont, in Oeuvres Complètes, edited by B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-69, Vol. 4, pp 937-38 (my translation). Now, one of these original movements of nature is idleness: "To do nothing is man's primary and strongest passion after that of self-preservation." Rousseau, J. J., Essay on the Origin of Languages, in The First and Second Discourses Together with the Replies to Critics and Essay on the Origin of Languages, translated by Victor Gourevitch, New York: Harper & Row, 1986, p 266n. Given the naturalness of idleness and the rightness of the natural, it follows that, for Rousseau, idleness is right and good. But since he warns us about the dangers of idleness in civil society, Rousseau's view must be that idleness is right and good for man only outside society. In society men must always be active.

27. In contrast, Rousseau claims that luxury is "the worst of all evils in any state whatever." Rousseau, J. J., A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, in The First and Second Discourses, translated by Roger Masters and Judith Masters, New York: St Martin's Press, 1964, p 199. Unlike Hume, Rousseau is opposed to luxury, commerce, and progress in the arts and sciences. For, as he says in the preface to Narcissus: "All our writers regard the crowning achievement of our century's politics to be [progress in] the sciences, the arts, luxury, commerce, laws, and all the other bonds which, by tightening the knots of society among men through self-interest, place them all in a position of mutual dependence." Rousseau, J. J., Narcissus (preface), in The First and Second Discourses Together with the Replies to Critics and Essay on the Origin of Languages, translated by Victor Courevitch, New York: Harper and Row, 1986, p 105. But according to Rousseau, all personal dependence (relying, using, controlling) is evil: "Dependence on men, since it is without order, engenders all the vices, and by it, master and slave are mutually corrupted." Rousseau, J. J., Emile; or, On Education, translated by Allan Bloom, New York: Basic Books, 1979, p 85.
28. In contrast, Rousseau argues that "the more [men] come together, the more they are corrupted. The infirmities of the body as well as the vices of the soul are the unfailing effect of this over crowding. Man is, of all the animals, the one who can least live in herds...Cities are the abyss of the human species." Rousseau, J. J., Emile; or, On Education, translated by Allan Bloom, New York: Basic Books, 1979, p 469; p 59.
29. According to Hume, "a serious attention to the sciences and liberal arts softens and humanizes the temper, and cherishes those fine emotions, in which true virtue and honour consists" (Essays 170).
30. As Warner notes, Hume uses the term "public" in two different senses. Sometimes he uses it in contrast to the "private" e.g. Essays 19; Essays 263; Essays 280. Other times, however, by "the public" Hume means "the government" e.g. Essays 255; Essays 272. Warner, Stuart D., "David Hume on the Public Interest", Reason

Papers, No. 15, Summer 1990, pp 74-90. See pp 77-78. It is clear that, here, Hume is using "the public" in the latter sense. Other examples of such a use will appear as this section progresses.

31. "But industry, knowledge, and humanity [all of which, as we have seen, are intertwined with the growth of luxury and commerce], are not advantageous in private life alone: They diffuse their beneficial influence on the public, and render the government as great and flourishing as they make individuals happy and prosperous" (Essays 272). In fact, Hume thinks that "the greatness of the sovereign and the happiness of the state are, in a great measure, united with regard to trade and manufactures" (Essays 262).

32. Though here we should note that in "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" Hume tells us that the executive must retain some arbitrary power in order to deal with emergencies: "The protector, the two secretaries, the council of state, with any five or more that the senate appoints, are possessed, on extraordinary emergencies, of dictatorial power for six months" (Essays 521). Hume's commitment to the principle of the absolute rule of law (except during crises) is undeniable, though this commitment is not blind: [T]hough some inconveniences arise from the maxim of adhering strictly to law, yet the advantages overbalance them, and should render the English grateful to the memory of their ancestors, who, after repeated contests at last established that noble, though dangerous, principle" (H 5 329-30; my emphasis).

33. A point brought out clearly by Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, pp 121-27.

34. Unlike Hume, Rousseau is revolted by the commercial classes, blaming them for Geveva's problems, (Rousseau, J. J., Lettres Ecrites de la Montagne, in Oeuvres Complètes, edited by B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-69, Vol. 3, p 881), and making sure that they do not form the foundation of either Corsica or Poland (Rousseau, J. J., Projet de Constitution pour la Corse, in Oeuvres Complètes, edited by B.

Gagnebin and M. Raymond, Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-69, Vol. 3, pp 904-05; p 911; pp 919-20; and Considérations sur le Gouvernement de Pologne, in Oeuvres Complètes, edited by B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-69, Vol. 3, p 1004).

35. Stewart stresses Hume's contempt for the "ancient nobility" and his admiration for the "middling rank". Stewart, Opinion and Reform, pp 191-92; pp 290-96. Phillipson too notes this admiration, but is silent on Hume's attitude towards the established nobility. Phillipson, Hume, p 55.
36. Rousseau too seeks to avoid extremes of wealth and poverty: "[T]olerate neither opulent people nor beggars. These two conditions, naturally inseparable, are equally fatal to the common good" Rousseau, J. J., On the Social Contract, in On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy, translated by Judith Masters and edited by Roger Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978, p 75n.
37. That a well-contrived republic is, in Hume's view, the best form of government, will come out clearly in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 3

1. As Stewart, to whom I am much indebted throughout this chapter, shows. Stewart, Opinion and Reform, pp 7-8; p 193; pp 205-06; p 210; p 215.
2. According to Hume, "we call every thing CUSTOM, which proceeds from a past repetition" (T 102; T 198).
3. I am indebted here, and elsewhere, to Winters, Barbara, "Hume on Reason", Hume Studies, vol. 5, no. 1, 1979, pp 20-35.
4. As Stewart notes, when Hume declares custom to be the guide of

life, all he is doing is "explaining...the origins of all beliefs, false as well as authentic. The decisive question asks how we can distinguish between false and authentic beliefs." Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 209. David Fate Norton stresses that Hume was interested in getting his readers to thoroughly examine their beliefs. Norton, David Hume: Common-Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician, pp 208-38. In other words, Hume's aim was not to emphasise the authority of custom and sentiment over reason and to get us to accept the authority of habitual belief as argued by Smith, Norman Kemp, The Philosophy of David Hume, London: Macmillan, 1941. Hume's philosophy was not, what Smith calls, "naturalistic...in tendency" (p 155).

5. Hume sometimes uses the terms "praise" and "blame" respectively.
6. While Hume tells us that moral judgements have human character and motives as their object, he admits that, since we cannot look within another mind, we must use "actions as signs or indications of certain principles in the mind and temper" (T 477). We commonly approve or disapprove of actions (T 477; T 517), but "[i]f any action be either virtuous or vicious, 'tis only as a sign of some quality or character" (T 575).
7. For good discussions on the role of reason in Hume's moral thought, discussions to which I am indebted, see Whelan, Order and Artifice, pp 201-03; and Stewart, Opinion and Reform, pp 141-44.
8. Stewart, Opinion and Reform, pp 205-06.
9. Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 338.
10. In fact, Hume's claim about "ultimate ends" occurs in the first appendix to the second Enquiry, entitled Concerning Moral Sentiment. Here, Hume makes use of the spectator (E II 289).
11. "Hume's rehabilitation of the passions [that is, Hume's discovery in Book 1 of the Treatise that unfettered reason leads us to crip-

pling Pyrrhonism and that salvation comes only by means of nature, in the form of the passions; that the passions do not corrupt but save and deliver] does not imply that reasoning cannot be powerful in forming and reforming morals. But here reasoning means, not demonstrative reasoning, but the experimental method of reasoning. Hume does not deny the role of moralists and politicians; on the contrary he insists on their importance. Provided they accept the goals of human nature as the ends to be sought, they can, by the experimental method of reasoning, first, help clear away pernicious old beliefs, and second, help discover the best means to those ends." Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 315. I agree with Stewart here on all points except one: I do not think that, for Hume, "the goals of human nature" are "the ends to be sought". Rather, I think that, for Hume, the goals of human nature, from the point of view of the spectator, ought to be sought.

12. Stephan Buckle correctly notes "some of Hume's most spectacularly non-sceptical views, such as his great optimism about the benefits to be secured by the development of commerce, and by the refinement of the arts in general. On these subjects, Hume is [very much]... removed from a sceptical view...In the economic writings his great optimism renders any sceptical tag, even the most mitigated, thoroughly inappropriate." Buckle, Stephan, Natural Law and the Theory of Property: Grotius to Hume, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, pp 250-51. Buckle's explanation for this lack of doubt differs from mine.

Given (as we have already seen) that, for Hume, economic, social, and political elements are intertwined as causes and effects, it follows that, according to Hume, the certainty attainable in the economic realm is transmitted to the social and political realms. That Hume thinks that certainty is possible in these realms (particularly the political) is something we have already seen. Thus, when Hume tells us things like, "the science of politics affords few rules, which will not admit of some exception" (Essays 477), we should not take him (as many have) as telling us that certainty in the realm of politics is impossible. Rather, we should take him only as being a consistent mitigated sceptic and denying dogmatism

(see pp 20-23 above).

13. According to Hume, education is founded on custom or repeated experience (T 116-17). But given that "[c]ustom may lead us into some false comparison of ideas" (T 116), it follows that education can (and often does) inculcate false beliefs. Education is "frequently contrary to reason" (T 117). Unfortunately "more than one half of those opinions, that prevail among mankind...[are] owing to education" (T 117).

However, not all education is bad. Hume does think that there is such a thing as "good education": "Virtue, which is nothing but a more enlarged and more cultivated reason, never flourishes to any degree...except where a good education becomes general; and where men are taught the pernicious consequences of vice, treachery, and immorality" (H 1 179-80. See also Essays 54-55). We shall deal with the subject of Hume, virtue and "good education" in Chapter 5.

14. If all this is correct, then it is clear that Hume's mitigated scepticism does not dictate conservatism as some have suggested (see "Introduction" note 28 above). Armed with the experimental method of reasoning, the mitigated sceptic is able to attain certainty (in the form of proofs) in the realm of human affairs, and in this way has the means to abandon pernicious inherited beliefs and embrace new, more salutary ones. Experimental reasoning enables the mitigated sceptic to move with confidence into a new, better future.

15. Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 209.

CHAPTER 4

1. While Stewart realises that the conservatism of the Humean individual causes problems for anyone wanting to talk about "Hume the non-conservative reformer" (Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 211; p 212; p 213) he fails to analyse and deal with this problem in any detail.

2. Hume notes: "The mind finds a satisfaction and ease in the view of objects, to which it is accustom'd, and naturally prefers them to others, which, tho', perhaps, in themselves more valuable, are less known to it" (T 355).
3. In the second Enquiry sympathy is no longer a mental mechanism, but a basic instinct of "benevolence" or "fellow-feeling" or "humanity" by means of which we have a disinterested concern for the happiness of others and by means of which we approve of those things that promote the happiness of others and disapprove of those things that do not (E II 219-32; E II 270-75). In this thesis I shall restrict myself to the way in which the term "sympathy" is used in the Treatise. For, as Whelan notes, this use "is more interesting, because more problematic and complex, than the Enquiry's". Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 160. For a good discussion of the question "What is behind Hume's revision of the role of sympathy?" and, generally, of the differences between Hume's moral philosophy in the Treatise and the second Enquiry see Capaldi, Nicholas, Hume's Place in Moral Philosophy, New York: Peter Lang, 1989, Chapter 7 passim, esp. (on the former question) pp 241-48.
4. Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 130.
5. See Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 160ff.
6. David Hume, "Dissertation on the Passions", in David Hume: The Philosophical Works, edited by T. H. Green and T. H. Groose, 4 Volumes, London: Longman, 1882, (reprint, Darmstadt: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1964), vol. 4, p 152.
7. Laursen, The Politics of Skepticism, p 158; p 165.
8. Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 206.

CHAPTER 5

1. While Stewart seems to be aware of the problem caused by Hume's views on justice and allegiance for anyone wanting to argue that (a) Hume was a non-conservative reformer, and (b) "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" ought to be taken seriously (Stewart, Opinion and Reform, pp 171-74; pp 215-19; pp 254-55), he fails, I think, to bring out and properly deal with this problem.
2. According to Wolin, because Hume placed severe limits upon the scope of rationalist reason, "[t]he net effect...was, of course, to undermine the whole theory of natural law with its immutable values discoverable by rationalist inquiry." Wolin, "Hume and Conservatism" in Hume: A Re-evaluation, p 242. Duncan Forbes, however, has shown that Hume was able to found his theory of natural law, not on rationalist reason, but on the experimental method of reasoning. Hume belongs, not to the rationalist tradition of modern natural law, but to the empirical tradition. Forbes, Hume's Philosophical Politics, pp 59-90.
3. While Hume does not use the terms "artificial" and "natural" virtues outside of the Treatise (in his Letter from a Gentleman, he uses these terms when referring to the Treatise), it is clear that he retained these concepts throughout his thought. On this point, and on the question of why Hume dropped the language of "artificial" and "natural" virtues, see Whelan, Order and Artifice, pp 218-19.
4. Hume does not use the term "conjectural history". To my knowledge the term was first used by Dugald Stewart. According to this method, "when we are unable to ascertain how men have actually conducted themselves upon particular occasions" we look at "the manner they are likely to have proceeded" by investigating "the principles of their nature, and the circumstances of their external situation." From these two elements, "human nature" and "external situation", we are able to account for the origins and development of law, religion, government, science etc. Dugald Stewart, Account

of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, in Stewart, Dugald, The Collected Works, edited by Sir William Hamilton, Edinburgh: Thomas Constable & Co., 1858, Vol 10, p 34. As we shall see now, it is by means of this method of conjectural history (that is, by examining the interaction between human nature and man's situation) that Hume sets out to answer the question, "What prompted humans to establish rules of justice and allegiance?"

5. Hume does not use the expressions "economic society" and "commercial society" in this context. However, since, for Hume, the rules of justice are meant to facilitate a "mutual exchange and commerce" within society (T 514; T 567; E II 195), we are justified in using these expressions.
6. According to Hume, "ability" is improved by "the partition of employments" (T 485), or the division of labour. Thus Hume, like so many before (and after) him, regards the principle of the division of labour as beneficial. His friend Rousseau, however, does not. For division of labour is a form of personal dependence, and dependence, Rousseau thinks, "since it is without order, engenders all the vices" (Rousseau, J. J., Emile; or, On Education, translated by Allan Bloom, New York: Basic Books, 1979, p 85) and is the cause of social disorder (Rousseau, J. J., A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, in The First and Second Discourses, translated by Roger Masters and Judith Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964 pp 151-52; pp 154-60). Thus, Rousseau's advice to the Corsicans is to severely limit the division of labour. Rousseau, J. J., Projet de Constitution pour la Corse, in Oeuvres Complètes, edited by B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-69, Vol. 3, p 914; pp 924-25.
7. Berry, Hume, Hegel and Human Nature, pp 74-80.
8. For a detailed discussion of this point see Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, pp 68-71.

A second reason why Hume thinks that people adopt "present pos-

session", "occupation", "prescription", "accession" and "succession" as their rules of property distribution is because they realise that these rules must be inflexible and exceptionless: "By the laws of society, this coat, this horse is mine and ought to remain perpetually in my possession: I reckon on the secure enjoyment of it: by depriving me on it, you disappoint my expectations" (E II 310; E II 304-05). Thus, "[p]ublic utility requires that property should be regulated by general inflexible rules" (E II 305). Hume thinks that it is because rules of property must be inflexible that people adopt the five "natural" rules of property distribution listed above. For it is only these rules that ensure that property will be assigned in a stable and exceptionless manner. They do not distribute goods "differently in every particular case", but "extend to the whole society" inflexibly, without exception (T 502). This is not so with other rules of property distribution. For example, if property were distributed on the basis of "merit", then, given the "natural obscurity" of this quality and the "self-conceit of each individual", we would never have a "determinate rule" of property allocation and, as a result, "the total dissolution of society must be the immediate consequence" (E II 193). The same would follow if we were to distribute property on the basis of need. Thus, "[t]he relation of fitness and suitableness ought never to enter into consideration, in distributing the properties of mankind; but we must govern ourselves by rules, which are more general in their application, and more free from doubt and uncertainty" (T 514).

In general, people ought not to (and in fact do not, as we shall see now in the long quote) adopt property rules which are not exceptionless, for,

this would produce infinite confusion in human society, and that the avidity and partiality of men wou'd quickly bring disorder into the world, if not restrain'd by some general and inflexible principles. 'Twas, therefore, with a view to this inconvenience, that men have establish'd those principles [for the distribution of property mentioned above], and have agreed to restrain themselves by general rules, which are unchangeable by spite

and favour, and by particular views of private or public interest (T 532).

We have seen that, according to Hume, people are willing to abide by the rules of property stabilisation on the condition that others do the same. People require the "expectation that others are to perform alike" before they refrain from violating the property of others. This expectation, as we saw, is founded on repeated experience or custom. Clearly, the fact that the rules of property adopted by people are exceptionless helps strengthen this custom and, therefore, this expectation.

So, according to Hume, people adopt the five rules of property mentioned above because (a) they seem natural to them and can be embraced without the need for contracts and promises, and (b) because they are inflexible, distributing goods without "spite and favour". It is for these reasons, also, that Hume himself recommends these rules (in contrast to rules founded on merit, need etc) as the rules of property distribution that ought to be embraced by society.

Finally, we should note that Hume's demand that the rules of property be exceptionless is linked intimately to his view that it is not the case that every single act of justice is beneficial. We have noted that, for Hume, justice (like all the artificial virtues) is approved of because of its utility. But from where does this utility arise? Not from every single act of justice, for we often find that "a single act of justice" is opposed to "the public good" or to "humanity" (T 579). "[I]t is impossible for...[the rules of justice] to prevent all particular hardships, or make beneficial consequences result from every individual case" (E II 305). However, while individual acts of justice are not always in harmony with the public good, the "whole plan or scheme" of justice is (E II 305), and it is from this "whole plan or scheme" that the utility of justice arises. Thus, "however single acts of justice may be contrary, either to private or public interest, 'tis certain that the whole plan or scheme is highly conducive, or indeed absolutely requisite, both to the support of society, and the well-being of every individual" (T 497). Given that the utility of justice is founded on the system of justice as a whole, rather

than on the individual acts of justice, it follows that, if this system is to yield its beneficial consequences, then "[p]roperty must be stable, and must be fix'd by general rules.

9. Whelan emphasises this educative role of the politician. Whelan, Order and Artifice, pp 250-93. I am indebted to this discussion. However, I do at times deviate from it significantly.
10. Here we should recall Hume's view noted in Chapter 3 that moral distinctions are founded on sentiments common to all humans.
11. Rousseau is one of those who argues that virtue is an artificial human creation: "[Positive] [l]aw comes before justice and not justice before [positive] law." Rousseau, J. J., Geneva Manuscript, in On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy, translated by Judith Masters and edited by Roger Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978, p 191. Hume would disagree, given, as we have seen, his view that justice can exist in a small, pre-governmental society. According to Rousseau, the state produces "a remarkable change in man, by substituting justice for instinct in his behavior and giving his actions the morality they previously lacked." Rousseau, J. J., On the Social Contract, in On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy, translated by Judith Masters and edited by Roger Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978, p 55. Hume, no doubt, would agree that the state produces an important change in man in the area of virtue (as our discussion so far makes clear). However, the change does not involve the complete invention of virtue (as Rousseau thinks), but instead the encouragement and guidance of sentiments which are natural to man. While the state, in Hume's view, is responsible for the moral status of certain types of behaviour, it does not invent moral distinctions.
12. Rousseau agrees, calling education "certainly the State's most important business." Rousseau, J. J., Discourse on Political Economy, in On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy, translated by Judith Masters and edited by Roger

Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978, p 223. However, it is clear that Hume and Rousseau would disagree about the object of this education by the state. See note 11 above.

13. For Hume, then, the politician brings order and virtue into political society, not by means of doctrines and books, but by properly arranging the laws and institutions of that political society. Rousseau agrees. See Rousseau, J. J., Projet de Constitution pour la Corse, in Oeuvres Complètes, edited by B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-69, Vol. 3, p 948.

We should also note that this quote indicates that, for Hume, a nation's constitution ought to be more than a mere means for the regulation of subjects' external, physical behaviour. Instead, it ought to be an instrument for the transformation (improvement) of human nature. This is why Hume thinks that "legislators and founders of states ought to be honoured and respected among men", and why he disagrees with the ancients for having "made gods of all the inventors of useful arts", but merely "dignif[ied] legislators ...only with the appellation of demigods and heroes" (Essays 55). The legislator's task is more glorious, because more important, than the inventor's (or anyone else's for that matter).

14. Elsewhere, Hume declares that, "[e]ducation, custom, and example, have a mighty influence in turning the mind" (Essays 270). Norton and Laursen, both of whom, as we saw in the "Introduction", take Hume to be a reformer, note Hume's talk of the use of habit as a way of achieving reform. Norton, David Fate, "An Introduction to Hume's Thought", in The Cambridge Companion to Hume, edited by David Fate Norton, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p 24; Laursen, The Politics of Skepticism, pp 164-65.
15. See Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, pp 86-9.
16. Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 218.
17. "Government is a mere human invention for the interest of society.

Where the tyranny of the governor removes this interest, it also removes the natural obligation to obedience. The moral obligation is founded on the natural, and therefore must cease where that ceases" (T 552-53). Hume notes that, while "[f]ew persons carry on this [i.e the above] train of reasoning" (T 552), still "'tis certain, that all men have an implicit notion of it, and are sensible, that they owe obedience to government merely on account of public interest" (T 553). Thus, for Hume, the above way of reasoning, is both the way people do in fact reason, and the way they ought to reason.

Miller downgrades the role of interest in Hume's theory of allegiance. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, pp 89-98. Stewart, on the other hand, emphasises this element. Stewart, Opinion and Reform, pp 172-74; p 255.

18. Thus, it seems that, for Hume, the principle of self-preservation has, not only a descriptive character, but also a prescriptive one. The same seems to be true of Rousseau: "Our first duties are to ourselves; our primary sentiments are centered on ourselves; all our natural movements relate in the first instance to our preservation." Rousseau, J. J., Emile; or, On Education, translated by Allan Bloom, New York: Basic Books, 1979, p 97 (my emphases).
19. As noted by Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 6; p 255.

CHAPTER 6

1. In fact, this detailed discussion will bring out a point which is of great significance for this thesis as a whole, namely, that, for Hume, well-contrived republicanism is the best form of government. As we shall see in the next chapter, some scholars deny this claim and hold that, in Hume's view, the best form of government is absolute "civilized" monarchy. But if this is so, then Hume could not have been serious about his own well-contrived republic. Thus, it is important for us to show that, for Hume, well-contrived republicanism is the best form of government. This will come out

in the following discussion of Hume's views of the advantages and disadvantages of the various forms of government he distinguishes. Here I should note that in this discussion I have benefited from the following works: Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, pp 142-162; Robertson, "The Scottish Enlightenment and the Civic Tradition" in Wealth and Virtue, pp 161-69; Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 171; pp 233-39.

2. Hume thinks that Sweden is also ruled by a limited monarchy (Essays 647, note j). However, he tells us nothing about the Swedish limited monarchy.
3. In contrast, Rousseau condemns representative democracy. According to him, only direct democracy will do. Rousseau, J. J., On the Social Contract, in On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy, translated by Judith Masters and edited by Roger Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978, pp 101-04.
4. As Stewart notes, such a situation will exist in Hume's well-contrived republic: "Hume's ideal society is not one ruled by a small aristocracy, but one in which many citizens, ideally most citizens, are in the middle station. It is these people - thoughtful, competent, balanced, moderate people - not monarchs and nobles, who are to have political power in his ideal commonwealth." Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 298.
5. As we have seen, in the counties, voting was restricted to those who met the forty-shilling freehold qualification. But in the 271 boroughs "there was a multiplicity of franchises. Burgages, or pieces of property, conferred the right to vote on their proprietors or tenants in some forty-one...Only the members of corporations were allowed to vote in nineteen...There were a hundred where the freemen voted. In the remaining fifty-five apart from the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, the franchise rested on some kind of residential qualification...In most boroughs...various restrictions were imposed. The least restrictive was the provision that inhabitants should be householders...Then came the boroughs

where men had to be self-sufficient and not in receipt of alms or charity...Finally there were the boroughs where the householders had actually to be paying church and poor rates, local taxes known as scot and lot...If the electorate was not qualified by universal manhood suffrage, neither was it distributed into equal electoral districts." Speck, W. A., Stability and Strife. England 1714-1760, London: Edward Arnold, 1977, pp 16-17.

6. However, Hume notes: "[T]hough the king has a negative in framing laws; yet this, in fact, is esteemed of so little moment, that whatever is voted by the two houses, is always sure to pass into a law, and the royal assent is little better than a form" (Essays 44).
7. "Let all freeholders of twenty pounds a-year in the county, and all householders worth 500 pounds in the town parishes, meet annually in the parish church, and chuse, by ballot, some freeholder of the county as their member, whom we shall call the county representative" (Essays 516). Thus, the voting qualifications of the Perfect Commonwealth will be very different from those of contemporary Britain. We should also note that, unlike in Britain (see note 5 above, final sentence) the Perfect Commonwealth will be divided into equal electoral districts. Thus, "[t]he first year in every century is set apart for correcting all inequalities, which time may have produced in the representatives" (Essays 522).
8. For surely Hume would not have constructed a form of government which did not allow (what he considers to be) the laws of nature to be fully realised.
9. Though, if what we said in Chapter 5 is correct, then, even if Britain's existing rules of justice were not close to the laws of nature (as uncovered by Hume), and the introduction of the Perfect Commonwealth into Britain did require the complete uprooting of that nation's existing rules of justice and their replacement by the new, natural rules of justice, still no problem would arise. See pp 168-174 above.

10. Harrington, James, The Commonwealth of Oceana, in The Commonwealth of Oceana and A System of Politics, edited by J. G. A Pocock, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp 100-01.
11. Though, as we saw in Chapter 5, Hume does think that "natural avidity" ought to be controlled and redirected by the rules of property. But, as we also saw, Hume is convinced that this re-direction does not violate human nature.
12. Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 342.
13. Whelan, Order and Artifice, p 342.

CHAPTER 7

1. Letwin, The Pursuit of Certainty, p 89.
2. Here we should note that Hume's condemnation of commonwealths which are "perfect and immortal" occurs during a reference to Harrington's Oceana. According to Harrington, not only is his model of government perfect, but also immortal. Harrington, James, The Commonwealth of Oceana, in The Commonwealth of Oceana and A System of Politics, edited by J. G. A Pocock, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp 217f.
3. As noted by Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 282 fn. 38.
4. Forbes, Hume's Philosophical Politics, p 168; p 182; p 183; my emphases.
5. Forbes, Hume's Philosophical Politics, p 182.
6. Here we should note that the letter is damaged. Where Greig has "[Revol]ution" (L II 306), Stewart has "[Constit]ution" (Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 283 fn. 38). I follow Stewart.

7. Forbes, Hume's Philosophical Politics, p 183.
8. Forbes, Hume's Philosophical Politics, p 183.
9. As Eugene Miller notes: "Hume revised his essays continually throughout his life-time, and there are many significant differences between earlier editions of the essay and the 1777 edition, which was corrected by Hume shortly before his death" (Essays 601).
10. See Eugene Miller's notes on these revisions. Essays 647.
11. And here we should note that Hume left open the possibility of a large republican state as early as 1742: "To balance a large state or society, whether monarchical or republican, on general laws, is a work of so great difficulty" (Essays 124; my emphases).
12. Forbes, Hume's Philosophical Politics, p 182.
13. Stewart, Opinion and Reform, p 283 fn. 38.
14. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 158.
15. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 158.
16. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 158.
17. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 158.
18. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 158.
19. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 158-59.
20. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 159.
21. Forbes, Hume's Philosophical Politics, p 168.
22. According to Miller, for Hume, "a republic would be the best solu-

- tion." Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 159.
23. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 161.
24. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 159.
25. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology, p 161.
26. Phillipson, Hume, pp 48-50.
27. Phillipson, Hume, pp 59-65.
28. Phillipson, Hume, 64-5.
29. Phillipson goes so far as to say that, for Hume, absolute "civilized" monarchy is "natural". Phillipson, Hume, p 59. But this is wrong. Recalling our discussion in Chapter 6, how can a form of government which (a) does not ensure the promotion of commerce (b) does not ensure equality of property (in Hume's sense) (c) leaves open the possibility that the ruler will use his subjects in order to advance "the greatness of the state", be natural for Hume? On the basis of what was said in Chapter 6, it seems that, for Hume, the only 'natural' form of government is free government, especially well-contrived republicanism.
30. Livingston, Hume's Philosophy of Common Life, p 315.
31. Livingston, Hume's Philosophy of Common Life, p 315.
32. Livingston, Hume's Philosophy of Common Life, p 315.
33. Baier, A Progress of Sentiments, p 268.
34. Baier, A Progress of Sentiments, p 267.
35. Baier, A Progress of Sentiments, p 268.

CHAPTER 8

1. Unfortunately, no scholar who takes "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" seriously, gives us a detailed account of how the Perfect Commonwealth will come into being.

2. Hume's talk of the "wise politician" is a good indication that, like so many philosophers before him, Hume demands the union of wisdom and political power. This also came out in Chapter 2 where we noted (a) Hume's demand that the existing property qualification for those allowed to vote in county elections in Britain be raised because current electors lack education (see pp 44-45 above), (b) his demand that there should be a change in the type of people sitting in the House of Lords (see p 51 above), and (c) his praise of the middle rank as the only group capable of attaining wisdom and knowledge (see p 84 above). His friend Rousseau also calls for the union of wisdom and power: "So long as power is alone on the one side, intellect and wisdom alone on the other, the people will continue to be vile, corrupt and unhappy." Rousseau, J. J., A Discourse on the Arts and Sciences, in The First and Second Discourses, translated by Roger Masters and Judith Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964, p 64.

3. As Miller's notes indicate, the passage quoted above from Essays 604-05 was dropped by Hume after 1768 and did not appear in the final 1777 edition of the Essays. Given this, it might seem that Hume abandoned the idea that people ought to be guided rationally, without the use of brutal force, as if they were beasts. However, as I have indicated, at Essays 477, Hume condemns reforms which are introduced in an "imperious" fashion, and he retained this idea in all editions of the Essays. Given this, we can say that, while Hume did withdraw Essays 604-05 from his work, he never abandoned the idea expressed therein.

4. Here we should recall Hume's idea that "example" is one of the things that has "a mighty influence in turning the mind" (Essays 270), and that there is an "imitation of superiors" by "the people"

(Essays 207).

5. According to Whelan, Hume "does allow (in apparent seriousness) that unusual circumstances might someday permit an effort to realize [the Perfect Commonwealth]...'in some distant part of the world'." Whelan, Order and Artifice, pp 342-43. I find nothing "apparent" about Hume's seriousness.
6. Rousseau, J. J., On the Social Contract, in On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy, translated by Judith Masters and edited by Roger Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978, p 68.
7. According to Rousseau, "good social institutions are those that best know how to denature man." Rousseau, J. J., Emile; or, On Education, translated by Allan Bloom, New York: Basic Books, 1979, p 40. Hume disagrees. Good institutions are those that respect the course of nature. As we saw in Chapter 6, the Perfect Commonwealth has such institutions. Regardless of the way in which the Perfect Commonwealth is erected (either by means of wise politicians improving the existing constitution, or by means of society's leaders leading the people into rebellion against an existing pernicious government, or by means of such leaders establishing an independent settlement in some distant land), those responsible for its erection will respect, build, and improve upon what has been provided for by "wise nature".
8. Here, it seems, Hume is giving us an empirical test for determining the best form of government: That form of government which best contributes to population growth is the best. And which form of government has such an effect, according to Hume? Republicanism. Thus, Hume thinks that the fact that in "SWISSERLAND...and HOLLAND ...the numbers of people...abound...prove[s] sufficiently the advantages of their [republican] political institutions" (Essays 403). Thus, here we have more evidence, if more were needed, that, for Hume, republicanism is to be preferred over all other types of government. Here, it is interesting to note that Rousseau gives

us an identical empirical test: "All other things being equal, the government under which...the citizens populate and multiply the most is infallibly the best." Rousseau, J. J., On the Social Contract, in On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy, translated by Judith Masters and edited by Roger Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978, p 96. Rousseau thinks that only his legitimate republic outlined in the Social Contract will have a positive effect upon population growth.

9. Here, two points should be made: (a) We noted earlier (p 258 above) that, while Hume talks about people belonging to inferior and superior ranks, he also talks about "the natural equality of mankind" (Essays 185). In other words, while society distinguishes people into inferiors and superiors, people are still by nature equal. Now, however, he tells that some humans are naturally inferior to others. I cannot see how these two positions can be brought into harmony. (b) We have already noted Hume's view that "the emulation, which naturally arises among...neighbouring nations" is a "source of improvement" (Essays 119). Thus we should ask whether Hume would allow that the "inferiors" living outside the walls of the Perfect Commonwealth might be "improved" as a result of emulating those living inside these walls. Probably not, for he believes that the "inferiority" of the outsiders is natural. They can never be improved.
10. In addition to Great Britain, Holland, and Venice, the following states also enjoy free governments (according to Hume): Sweden (ruled by a limited monarchy (Essays 647 note j), republican Switzerland (Essays 127; Essays 403), republican Genoa (Essays 92), and the free city of Hamburg (Essays 92).
11. We have already noted Hume's view that small states naturally move towards free government (Essays 119; Essays 527). Given, as we have also already noted, Hume's approval of the movements of nature, it follows that this "mimicry" by small states of "greater monarchies" (which Hume clearly condemns) must have caused Hume great distress. Rousseau, too, condemns such mimicry: "[The large

monarchies of Europe] shine with that brilliance which dazzles most eyes [the eyes of the surrounding, smaller states], the childish and fatal taste for which is the most mortal enemy of happiness and freedom." Rousseau, J. J., A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, in The First and Second Discourses, translated by Roger Masters and Judith Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964, p 90.

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