



Hume and Derrida on Language and Meaning

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HUME AND DERRIDA ON LANGUAGE AND MEANING

"...Language itself is menaced in its very life, helpless, adrift in the threat of limitlessness, brought back to its own finitude at the very moment when its limits seem to disappear, when it ceases to be self-assured, contained, and guaranteed by the infinite signified which seemed to exceed it."¹ Is this true? What does it mean?

Derrida is making a contrast between two views of language. On the view that Derrida believes correct, the linguistic sign, whether spoken or written, acquires its meaning, its significance, from conventions. On this view, meaning is a matter of nomos or institution rather than physis or nature. Since meaning is a matter of convention rather than nature, the sign on this view is arbitrary. And in this respect, there is no distinction between the linguistic or phonic sign and the written or graphic sign.²

The other view of language denies that all significance is a matter of nomos. There are, rather, at least some signs the signification of which is natural. This view of language is one that Derrida, quite correctly, locates in Plato. It is there already, perhaps especially, in the Meno.

Socrates distinguishes knowledge from true opinions:

...true opinions, as long as they remain, are a fine thing and all they do is good, but they are not willing to remain long, and they escape from a man's mind, so that they are not worth much until one ties them down by (giving) an account of the reason why. And that, Meno my friend, is recollection, as we previously agreed. After they are tied down, in the first place they become

knowledge, and then they remain in place. That is why knowledge is prized higher than correct opinion in being tied down.³

Knowledge is thus certain, or incorrigible. There is no knowledge that lacks a guarantee of its truth. This knowledge is obtained through a form of knowing that Socrates argues is akin to "recollection." The details of what recollection is need not detain us; what is important is what recollection is a knowledge of. There are in fact two cases with which the Meno deals.

The first is the case of geometrical propositions.⁴ In the course of Socrates' interrogation, Meno's slave boy discovers that a certain geometrical proposition is true. Recollection is, thus, in the first place a discovery of facts that makes propositions true. That a proposition is true is, in general, not a matter of convention: truth depends upon the facts that the proposition is about, and whether those facts do or do not obtain will in general not be dependent upon any social institutions or conventions. On the other hand, it is compatible with this to hold that what a proposition means is a matter of convention. That 'Hume ist tot' means in German that Hume is dead is a matter of convention, just as it is a matter of convention that 'Hume is not dead' means in English that Hume is not dead; but it is not a matter of convention, but of non-linguistic fact, that the former is true and the latter false. Importantly, Socrates first obtains from Meno an affirmative answer to the question "Does he speak Greek?" before he begins his examination of the slave boy. The boy can thus be taken to understand the conventions that determine the meaning of the proposition the truth of

which he discovers. Grasping meaning may in this way be a matter of grasping conventions; but to grasp the truth is not a matter of convention.

However, this is not Plato's view, as is made clear by the second example of the sort of thing of which recollection is supposed to yield knowledge. What Socrates seeks is a definition of 'virtue;' he even gives Meno a brief course on how to give good definitions.⁵ And this search is, for Socrates, analogous to the search for the truth of the slave boy's geometrical proposition. As the slave boy searches for the truth with respect to a geometrical proposition, so Socrates searches for the truth with respect to the definition of 'virtue.' In each case the search terminates in the same sort of thing, to wit, the knowledge of a form (eidos).⁶ As the recollection of a form provides a non-conventional answer to the slave boy's quest, so the recollection of a form will provide a non-conventional answer to Socrates' quest. The form of virtue thus tells us non-conventionally what is the real definition of 'virtue,' what is its true meaning. For Socrates, then, meaning is natural rather than conventional. Moreover, this natural meaning is grasped through recollection, which is a form of knowledge. This knowledge, once acquired, is incorrigible. Not only truth but the very intelligibility of all discourse derives from the forms; and genuine understanding requires the mind to penetrate beyond the conventions of language to that source of intelligibility which, once grasped, guarantees its own unchanging solidity and incorrigibility.

But of course, this intelligibility is insight into the very being of things. For, as the Phaedo puts it, "if there is anything beautiful

besides the Beautiful itself, it is beautiful for no other reason than that it shares in that Beautiful,"⁷ and, more generally, as the speakers agreed, "each of the Forms existed, and ... other things acquired their name by having a share in them...."⁸ The relation between the sign 'F' and an object a to which it applies is that of naming; it is conventional. For that convention may or may not be correct. It is correct just in case that it signifies the form F and a shares in that form. Thus, a's being, what a is correctly said to be, is constituted by its participation in the forms. It is evident that, when the mind penetrates beyond linguistic conventions to the forms that constitute the standards of true meaning, the mind has thereby penetrated to that which constitutes the being of things. The forms are thus at once the ground of the being of things and the source of all intelligibility of discourse about those things.

It is this Platonic view of language that Derrida rejects. On this view, reading and writing as patterns of signs are "preceded by a truth, or a meaning already constituted by and within the element of the logos."⁹ As the Phaedrus insists,¹⁰ one must contrast the writing of truth in the soul by the forms with ordinary writing. The latter is "a sign signifying a signifier itself signifying an eternal verity, eternally thought and spoken in the proximity of a present logos."¹¹ The natural, eternal and universal writing is contrasted to writing in the literal sense which is "thus thought on the side of culture, technique, and artifice,"¹² i.e., conventional. But Derrida rejects such natural meanings: all meaning is conventional. Since all linguistic signs are equally conventional, equally

arbitrary, a radical distinction between the linguistic and the graphic is forbidden.¹³ In terms of the distinction of the Phaedrus, all linguistic signs are to be reckoned on the side of writing in the literal sense, that is, the conventional; "writing thus comprehends language."¹⁴ This puts it a bit paradoxically, but the point is clear enough.

The Platonic tradition that Derrida disputes has, of course, a long history, though it is one with its variations. One of these variations is Locke, whose "conceptualism" is, in a sense, Platonism with the forms fallen into the mind. For Locke, objects known by sense are objectively similar or dissimilar in certain respects. The mind forms ideas from these by separating various aspects from objects and uniting these into abstract ideas.¹⁵ Words are used by men to "stand ... for the reality of things."¹⁶ But this conventional connection in which we apply the same term to several things may be correct or incorrect; it is correct just in case that the usage in which the words collect objects into classes corresponds to the way in which one's ideas collect objects into classes. In this sense, the correct objective signification of words is determined by one's ideas; words ought to express our ideas. Or, as Locke puts it, "...it is a perverting the use of words, and brings unavoidable obscurity and confusion into their signification, whenever we make them stand for any thing, but those ideas we have in our own minds."¹⁷ Although Locke does not hold that the objective being of things is grounded in our abstract ideas; nonetheless, what things can correctly be said to be is grounded in our abstract ideas. Thus, although Locke is a conceptualist where Plato is a realist, the two agree that the intelligibility of

all discourse derives from non-linguistic entities, and that genuine understanding requires the mind to grasp these pre-linguistic and non-conventional sources of true meaning.

Men introduce language in order to serve a social purpose: "The comfort and advantage of society not being to be had without communication of thoughts, it was necessary that man should find some external sensible signs, whereof those invisible ideas, which his thoughts are made up for, might be known to others."¹⁸ If this purpose is to be achieved, settled and shared conventions are required: "This is so necessary in the use of language, that in this respect the knowing and the ignorant, the learned and the unlearned, use the words they speak (with any meaning) all alike."¹⁹ Pufendorf was to pursue this line of thought, and connect it to the notion of a social contract. Duties, for Pufendorf, are absolute or conditional;²⁰ the former derive directly from natural law,²¹ while the latter "presuppose an express or tacit agreement."²² It is a general and absolute duty of natural law that one keep these agreements;²³ men enter into these agreements when advantage makes it reasonable to do so.²⁴ There are three basic compacts upon which all others are conditional: "The rest presuppose either some human institution, based upon a universal convention, and introduced among men, or else upon some particular form of government. Of such institutions we observe in particular three: language, ownership and value, and human government."²⁵ It is the first of these that concerns us here.

...that the use of language be not in vain, if each were to call a thing by any name he pleased, there must be

among the users of the same language a tacit convention, to designate a certain thing by a certain word and no other. For unless there has been agreement upon a uniform application of words, it is impossible to gather from another's speech the thoughts of his mind. Therefore by virtue of that compact every man is bound in common speech to employ words according as the established usage of that language prescribes.²⁶

The conventions of language are not just descriptions of the use of words; they are also binding, in the sense of being rules that have imperatival and, indeed, moral force. In this sense Pufendorf is correct: in this respect, he goes beyond Locke in attempting to locate a source for that obligation. But Pufendorf's account of the source of that obligation, namely, in a prior compact, if only a compact that is tacit and therefore not logically prior, is an account that clearly presupposes that there is thought that is prior to linguistic convention. For, if Pufendorf is correct, there must be a sort of thought that is prior to language in which reason can move, can recognize the utility of the linguistic conventions and of the compact to enforce those conventions and can tacitly agree to such a compact by conforming one's language to those conventions and to thereby enjoy the goods such conformity generates. Thus, for Pufendorf as for Plato, thought precedes language, and, indeed, all social conventions, all social institutions. Rationality is prior to (all human) discourse, man the rational animal prior to man the political animal.

For Derrida, of course, all this is backwards. But in making such a claim Derrida has been preceded by Hume.

Hume objects to Locke's theory of ideas on grounds that are essentially those of Berkeley,²⁷ that the claim that they can be formed by separating in thought aspects or properties of things presented in sense experience, is a claim that is inconsistent with two other Lockean claims, namely, first, the anti-Platonist thesis that the grounds which make the application of general terms true of things, i.e., observable properties, are ontologically not separate from things, and second the thesis common to all philosophers of the age, that the thinkable is possible.²⁸ For, if an abstract idea is formed by thought separating an aspect, and what is thinkable is possible, then the aspect thought separates turns out to be separable in reality, which is contrary to the anti-Platonist thesis that properties are not separable from things.

However, Berkeley's argument is negative; it rejects one account of how it is that we acquire the capacity to use general terms, but it does not provide a positive alternative account.²⁹ Hume remedies this gap in Berkeley's position.

We are aware in sense experience of entities that have various sensible properties. These entities, which are not subjective,³⁰ and which Hume calls "impressions," are thus objectively similar and dissimilar. Awareness of these sensible entities causes³¹ ideas to form; these ideas are themselves sensory contents, and they are copies, generally fainter, of the impressions that are their causes.³² Ideas are therefore also objectively similar and dissimilar to the things that are their causes and to the other sensible entities that are similar and dissimilar to the latter. Let us say that sensible entities, impressions and ideas, that are objectively

similar in a certain respect form a resemblance class of things. The question, how do we acquire the capacity to use general terms? is therefore the question, how do we acquire the capacity to apply a term to all the members of a resemblance class of entities?

Hume answers this question in terms of a scientific psychological theory of learning. The basic principle of this theory is that if x's are regularly present in experience with a's, then the idea (image) of an x comes to be associated with a's in one's mind. To say that such an association obtains is to say that whenever an a is presented, either an a impression or the idea of an a, then the idea of an x is evoked. Note that to say that the idea of an x is associated with the idea of an a is to assert a regularity, but it is a conditioned regularity, one that comes to hold of an individual only consequent upon the obtaining of certain conditions, namely, those of learning, and in particular, regular connection in experience. Hume's theory of learning also has a principle of generalization, if an idea of an x is associated with a's and a's (and ideas of a's) resemble b's then the idea of an x comes to be associated with b's. Now let x be a sign, either oral or written. If it is associated in experience with an object of a certain sort (e.g., others so use it in one's experience) then it (the idea of it) will come to be associated in thought with that object and will further come to be associated in thought with resembling objects and ideas.³³ In this way one acquires the capacity to apply a word to all the members of a resemblance class of entities. Or, in other words, words become

general through the operation of the associative mechanisms.

Hume has thus succeeded in explaining, or at least sketching an explanation of how we acquire the capacity to use general terms without invoking any mysterious abstract ideas. Indeed, on Hume's account an abstract idea simply is the acquired capacity to apply a general term to resembling things. It is not an entity but a disposition,³⁴ and as such solves many of the problems that confront Locke's position, e.g., how the abstract idea of a triangle can include all the specific forms of triangle within it, scalene, equilateral, etc., and the infinity of particular sensible triangles.³⁵

The philosophical tradition from which Hume emerged had a settled doctrine in which thought proceeded by means of abstract ideas. A judgment consisted in the conjoining affirmatively or negatively of abstract ideas; reasoning consisted of arranging judgments into syllogisms. Locke challenged the view that the primary premisses of syllogisms were known a priori;³⁶ Hume continued that critique.³⁷ A general proposition consists in abstract ideas joined regularly in thought. Such a regular connection is the result of processes of association.³⁸ The judgment is justified just in case that the association has taken place in conformity to the "rules by which to judge of causes and effects;"³⁹ or so Hume argues.⁴⁰ These scientific judgments include, of course, those of psychology, that is, the science the principles of which are used to explain the forming of such judgments.⁴¹ But this aside, Hume's view of reasoning, that it consists in the deployment of ideas, is fairly traditional. The radical move is

the construal of the ideas as the abstract ideas of his own account. Thus, the conjoining of ideas becomes the conjoining of capacities to use words; and the judgment will be occurrent rather than dispositional just in case that the dispositions that the abstract ideas are, are actualized, that is, just in case that signs one is disposed to employ actually are imaged or tokened. Thus, for Hume, as for Derrida much later, "we think only in signs."⁴²

What happens in learning, of course, is that people come to conform to the settled convention for the use of a sign. Through learning, the convention is passed on from older to newer members of a linguistic community. This settled convention is precisely what Derrida refers to as the "instituted trace."⁴³ This trace is, as Hume says, an acquired capacity; it is a disposition. For Hume, and for Derrida, in contrast to Plato or Locke, an idea is not a thing, not an entity, but a disposition or capacity. These dispositions are our abstract ideas. They not only make thought possible; thought consists in the ordering of these dispositions. The acquisition of these dispositions is a contingent matter; it is they which make it possible to say what things are, that is, to make predications, correct or incorrect, of things, and which make it possible to ask the questions for which these judgments are answers, such questions as, Are A's also B's? and, What sorts of things are these? or, more briefly, What is? All this is clear enough, and sober enough, but Derrida characteristically makes it sound more paradoxical than it is: "the trace is nothing, it is not an entity, it exceeds the question What is? and contingently makes it possible."⁴⁴

In order to develop fully Hume's account of language, one would have to go on to say much more than can be said here about the status of conventions in Hume's philosophy, or rather, his scientific account of man. One would need to spell out how the language of imperatives works, and specifically its connection with motivations. An imperative, through its connection to motivations, brings about, i.e., causes, the behaviour it describes. This account of imperatives would then have to be generalized to the case of general imperatives or rules. These rules, considered descriptively, describe conventional behaviour patterns, and considered imperatively or as norms bring about, i.e., cause conformity to those patterns.⁴⁵ Hume discusses such conventions in detail when he discusses the conventions of property and promising. The discussion there, while specific to the conventions of civil society, shows how such norms are inseparable from the language of imperatives,⁴⁶ and can be extended to cover the conventions of language themselves.⁴⁷ They can also be extended to cover the conventions of rational thought, that is, the conventional thought patterns that are the "rules by which to judge of causes and effects."

In each case, the conventions are first learned by trial and error, but are maintained in the first instance because of interest; each discovers that it is in the interest of himself to maintain the conventions, to conform to them himself and to maintain the conformity of others to them. But he not only discovers that it is in his own interest but in the interest of all. So the mechanism of sympathy comes into play, and the rules thereby acquire a moral force which is at once motivating and dis-

interested. This moral force not only motivates oneself, strengthens one's resolve to conform to the conventions, but, since it is disinterested, moves us to institute means to secure the conformity of others to the conventional pattern. Specifically, it would include, one, bringing it about, e.g., by teaching but by many other means too, that newcomers to the society acquire the appropriate habits, conform to the relevant conventions. And it would include, two, bringing it about, e.g., by self-discipline, that oneself more consistently and regularly conforms to the conventional patterns.⁴⁸

In this way the conventions of language and of rationality acquire and maintain a disinterested motivating and regulating power. There is nothing mysterious about it; it is, on the whole, and in outline at least, easily seen to be consequences of Hume's scientific theory of learning, and his theory of motivation, including in the latter not only the theory of the passions but also the mechanisms of sympathy. The psychology may be primitive, but there is little that could not, with minor adjustments, be fit into contemporary psychological theorizing. Once we recognize all this, we see that Derrida's remark about conventions, that "the instituted trace is 'unmotivated' but not capricious"⁴⁹ is not entirely just. They are certainly not capricious, since they are learned; it is no accident that we conform to them, nor, indeed, that we discipline ourselves and others to conform to them. And insofar as there is no real meaning of the Platonic or Lockean sort to decide which conventions are correct, then they are indeed arbitrary and in that sense unmotivated. Nonetheless, given man's interest in communication, it is in one's interest that there be some linguistic

conventions or other, and given that one is always born into a community, it is in one's own interest and that of the other members of the community to conform to the conventions that have as a matter of fact - contingent fact - become instituted. As for the norms of rationality, conformity to these serves our interest in truth - our curiosity - which itself is both disinterested and pragmatic.⁵⁰ Finally both the conventions of language and of rationality acquire, as we have seen, a certain moral force which is another motivating factor. For these reasons Derrida's comment that the conventions are unmotivated is misleading. Contrary to the Platonist, we may indeed choose conventions as we please, but only some of those that we may choose actually do please us.

"We think only in signs:" this describes Hume's view as well as that of Derrida. What this means is that thought presupposes linguistic conventions. And if Hume is correct, then men conform to these conventions as a matter of learning, and, specifically, learning in a social context. For Locke, for Pufendorf, for Plato, ideas are non-linguistic, and thought and rationality are prior to man's participation in society. But for Hume, thought and rationality presuppose - to be sure, as a matter of contingent fact, the facts of learning theory - man's participation in society. For Hume, then, in total contrast to his predecessors, man's social being is prior to his rationality.

Rationality undergoes a radical revision upon this view of man. Man has a certain interest, called curiosity, in matter of fact truth. Reason is simply the strategy the mind adopts to best satisfy this interest.⁵¹ There is no absolute standard that

justifies this interest; men just have it, as they have other, various motives. So far as we can discover, the rules of empirical science, the "rules by which to judge of causes," provide the best strategy for satisfying our curiosity, so far as such satisfaction can be attained. One can give similar considerations, in terms of human interests, to prefer the strategies of thought of empirical science, to those of the metaphysician.⁵² How much less exciting than the Platonic or Cartesian idea that rationality consists in the intuition of forms or essences that transcend the world of space and time that we know by means of our sense experience. On the other hand, though exciting, it is inhuman, proposing to man cognitive goals that are, so Hume argues, unattainable.⁵³ So, if the Humean view of reason is less exciting than Plato's, it is also the more human view, the more humanistic.

Hume lays out in detail the new concept of rationality, and defends the norms of empirical science as those that can provide the correct strategy for satisfying our cognitive interests, so far as they can be satisfied. Derrida, too, proclaims the need for a new "rationality."⁵⁴ For him, what this means is that one must introduce a rhetoric that allows one to "deconstruct" the Platonic view of language that has it that conventions are and ought to be grounded in real meaning.⁵⁵ Since ordinary accounts of language are pervaded by the Platonic view, one must use the very language of logos to argue against it.

Hume, too, recognizes this problem. There are no absolutes, there are no guarantees, yet the language of, e.g., knowledge, is full of conventions that imply that such a guarantee obtains, and Hume at

times must use such language in the very act of denying that there are such guarantees. All one can do is warn one's readers, and to apologize for the misleadingness of the language that one must perforce, in the absence of any other, at times use.

'Tis easier to forbear all examination and enquiry, than to check ourselves in so natural a propensity, and guard against that assurance, which always arises from an exact and full survey of an object. On such an occasion we are apt not only to forget our scepticism, but even our modesty too; and make use of such terms as these, 'tis evident, 'tis certain, 'tis undeniable; which a due deference to the public ought, perhaps, to prevent. I may have fallen into this fault after the example of others; but I here enter a caveat against any objections, which may be offer'd on that head; and declare that such expressions were extort'd from me by the present view of the object, and imply no dogmatical spirit, nor conceited idea of my own judgment, which are sentiments that I am sensible can become no body, and a sceptic still less than any other.⁵⁶

But the great task for Hume is to actually develop one's arguments.

Hume actually argues against the rationalist, the Platonist. The closest Derrida comes to an argument is that the empiricist view of language is a matter of historical necessity; it is the direction in which history is moving:

By a slow movement whose necessity is hardly perceptible, everything that for at least some twenty centuries tended toward and finally succeeded in being gathered under the name of language is beginning to let itself be transferred to, or at least summarized⁵⁷ under, the name of writing. ... Their movement was

absolutely necessary with a necessity
that cannot be judged by any other
tribunal.⁵⁸

But this is simply to make history the logos that justifies usage; the convention of treating all language as conventional is justified because it is the non-conventional outcome of history. But history can no more provide a non-contingent guarantee than anything else.⁵⁹ For, as Hume argued, as part of his empiricist programme, there are no objective necessary connections, no forms or essences that could provide an objective ground of either certainty or value. The norm that directs one to proceed as if all language is conventional is justified, not by any metaphysical necessity, but by the fact that one's arguments make it reasonable - but not absolutely certain in the way Plato required⁶⁰ - that there are no forms or essences or whatnot to provide objective necessities and real meanings.

Moreover, having developed his arguments against the Platonist, Hume proceeds to try to defend a specific rationality, namely, that of empirical science, the "rules by which to judge of causes." And still further, he employs that rationality to develop a scientific theory, his psychological theory of learning, that will satisfy our human curiosity about how linguistic conventions come to be conformed to, and passed from generation to generation, and, indeed, changed, including the conventions of empirical scientific rationality.⁶¹ In fact, he proposes a theory that enables us to understand, empirically, not only how the conventions of empirical science come to be conformed to, but also, how the Platonist illusions arise.⁶²

For the Humean, as for Derrida, of course, Platonism, contrary to its own intentions, is just

one set of conventions among others, and where for the Platonist the physis/nomos distinction is one of a kind, for the Humean the two sides of this dichotomy are equally conventional. The conventionality of physis is disguised from the Platonist by the illusions of philosophy. One can put this paradoxically -- the non-conventional is really merely a convention -- in a way that is beloved by Derrida. One must also say in a way beloved by Derrida that for the Humean the traditional dichotomy disappears, and that the rhetorical 'merely' in 'merely conventional,' for all its persuasive utility, in fact loses all force it might have in directing our attention to an objective contrast; its point, rather, is to puncture the illusions of the Platonist through an element of shock. But for Hume, unlike Derrida, the crucial point is not the paradoxical formulation nor the shocking re-formulation in empiricist terms of the traditional discourse of the Platonist; it is rather that a theory can be developed by the empiricist to enable us to understand, empirically and scientifically, both man at his best, as a rational animal, and man at his less-than-best, as an animal that thinks but is gripped by the illusions of religion or of Platonist philosophy.

There is none of this attempt at understanding in Derrida. In this respect there is a real lack of humanity and of concern to understand one's fellows in Derrida as compared to Hume. Hume is a genuine humanist, intent upon developing an account of rationality and of human understanding which will enable one to conform to the injunction of the oracle to "Know thyself." Derrida, in sharp contrast, is content to be fascinated by the shallow

question of how to develop a new rhetoric - shallow, because if Hume is correct then one could develop a new and adequate rhetoric only if one has acquired an empirical psychological theory that could provide the understanding necessary for assessing the appropriateness of various linguistic means for achieving one's communicative ends.

Where Derrida asserts the errors of Plato, Hume argues that they are errors. Where Derrida proclaims a new rationality that is no more than a rhetoric, Hume develops an account of reason, as strategy and as empirical science, that can penetrate below rhetoric to truths that can satisfy our reasonable cognitive interests. Where Derrida delights in the paradox of deconstruction, Hume proceeds to try to develop an empirically adequate theory of human nature.

Derrida can be fun. So, too, can Hume. But Hume is also serious.

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1. J. Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans., F.P. Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 6; his italics.
2. Ibid., p. 44.
3. Meno, 98a; Grube translation.
4. Meno, 82b - 85c.
5. Meno, 75b - 76e.

6. Meno, 72c.
7. Phaedo, 100c; Grube translation.
8. Phaedo, 102b.
9. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 14.
10. Phaedrus, 278a.
11. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 15.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. 44.
14. Ibid., p. 7; his italics. Cf. p. 55.
15. John Locke, Essay concerning Human Understanding, A.C. Fraser, ed., (London: Oxford University Press, 1894), II, xii, 1 (=Book I, Chapter xii, Paragraph 1), vol. II, p. 11.
16. Ibid., III, ii, 5, vol. II, p. 11.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., III, ii, 1, vol. II, p. 8.
19. Ibid., III, ii, 3, vol. II, p. 10.
20. S. von Pufendorf, De Oficio Hominis et Civis juxta Legem Naturalem Libri Duo (The Two Books on the Duty of Man and Citizen according to the Natural Law), trans. F.G. Moore (New York: Oxford University Press, 1927), I, v, 1 (=Book I, Chapter V, paragraph 1).
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., I, ix, 1.
23. Ibid., I, ix, 3.
24. Ibid., I, ix, 2.
25. Ibid., I, ix. 22.
26. Ibid., I, x. 2.
27. Cf. J. Weinberg, "Abstraction," in his Abstraction, Relation, Induction, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965).

28. D. Hume, Treatise of Human Nature, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (London: Oxford University Press, 1888), p. 17 and pp. 19-20.
29. Cf. A. Meinong, "Hume Studies I," in K. Barber, Meinong's Hume Studies: Translation and Commentary (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1966).
30. Cf. D. Livingston, Hume's Philosophy of Common Life (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). F. Wilson, "Is Hume a Sceptic with regard to the Senses?" Journal of the History of Philosophy, forthcoming.
31. Hume, Treatise, p. 1.
32. Cf. F. Wilson, "Hume's Theory of Mental Activity," in D.F. Norton, N. Capaldi and W. Robison eds., McGill Hume Studies (San Diego: Austin Hill Press, 1979), pp. 101-120.
33. Hume, Treatise, p. 11.
34. Ibid., p. 22.
35. Ibid., pp. 20-21.
36. Cf. F. Wilson, "The Lockean Revolution in the Theory of Science," in a festschrift for R.F. McRae edited by S. Tweyman and G. Moyal.
37. Cf. F. Wilson, "Hume's Defence of Science," Dialogue, forthcoming.
38. Cf. Wilson, "Hume's Theory of Mental Activity."
39. Hume, Treatise, I, III, xv.
40. Cf. F. Wilson, "Hume's Defence of Causal Inference," Dialogue, 22 (1983), and "Hume's Defence of Science."
41. Cf. F. Wilson, "Hume's Theory of Mental Activity."
42. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 50. Derrida is, of course, quoting Peirce when he uses this phrase. Idealism intervened between Hume and Peirce. In Britain it was Coleridge and Sir William Hamilton, and in America these ideas were propagated by Emerson and the New England Transcendentalists. Peirce's view of Hume and

of empiricism was always distorted by what he had inherited from this idealist background. As a consequence he had to re-discover for himself much of what Hume had already done; but even so much of what he arrives at is still obscured by the idealist dross that he was never able entirely to escape. There is a connection here to Derrida, who also shares some of this sort of idealist background and who has not been able to abandon some of the Hegelian notions he learned as a youth (see, for example, the passage cited below by fn. 58).

43. Ibid., p. 46.
44. Ibid., p. 75.
45. Cf. F. Wilson, "Marras on Sellars on Thought and Language," Philosophical Studies, 28 (1975), for a discussion of this pattern.
46. Hume, Treatise, pp. 551-2. Cf. P. Ardal, "Convention and Value," in G.P. Morice, ed., David Hume Bicentenary Papers (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1977).
47. Cf. Livingston, Hume's Philosophy of Common Life, pp. 65-72.
48. Cf. Wilson, "Hume's Theory of Mental Activity."
49. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 46.
50. Cf. Wilson, "Hume's Defence of Science."
51. Cf. F. Wilson, "Is Hume a Sceptic with regard to Reason?" Philosophy Research Archives, 10 (1984).
52. Cf. Wilson, "Hume's Defence of Science."
53. Cf. F. Wilson, "Hume's Cognitive Stoicism," Hume Studies, 10th Anniversary Issue, 1985, pp. 52-68.
54. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 10.
55. Cf. J. Culler, On Deconstruction (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 81-2, p. 259.
56. Hume, Treatise, pp. 273-4. Compare J. Culler, On Deconstruction, p. 259:

Since, deconstruction treats any position, theme, origin, or end as a construction and analyzes the discursive forces that produce it, deconstructive writings will try to put into question anything that might seem a positive conclusion and will try to make their own stopping point distinctively divided, paradoxical, arbitrary or indeterminate.

But, first, one can be positive without ceasing to be provisional, which is the central point of deconstruction (cf. ibid., p. 225). Second, something can be arbitrary relative to Platonic standards without being unmotivated or pointless, as we have seen. And third, one can draw a reader's attention to one's rejection of absolutes and givens and the fact that one's language, shot through with Platonism, may make one seem to be arbitrary or paradoxical or divided against oneself, without using the rhetorical ploys of paradox, etc., to highlight this. These ploys may be fun, but they are certainly not necessary; and their indulgence by Derrida and other deconstructionists testifies more to an adolescent aim to shock than it does to a philosophic concern for the truth.

57. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 6.
58. Ibid., p. 7; cf. p. 14.
59. Cf. J. Culler, On Deconstruction, p. 130: "History is not a priveleged authority...."
60. Cf. Wilson, "The Lockean Revolution in the Theory of Science."
61. It is not at all paradoxical that deconstructive criticism does not stand outside the domain of learned convention, contrary to what J. Culler, On Deconstruction, pp. 87-8, pp. 183-4, p. 225, suggests.
62. Cf. Wilson, "Hume's Defence of Science."