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Volume LV

THE ASSOCIATION OF
IDEAS AND CRITICAL THEORY
IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
ENGLAND

*A History of a Psychological Method in
English Criticism*

by

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PREFACE

The psychology known as "the association of ideas" has often been mentioned in studies in the history of ideas, taste, and criticism in eighteenth-century English literature. It has been dealt with in discussions of several important focal concepts in critical thought: genius and the imagination, the sublime and the picturesque, the idea of progress, and standards of taste. It has also been considered of some moment in the criticism of Shakespeare, and in specialized studies of such figures as Hobbes, Locke, Addison, Kames, Gerard, and Erasmus Darwin; and, of course, its influence on Wordsworth and Coleridge has been assayed more than once.

The significance of this psychology with respect to criticism is clearly acknowledged. But because emphasis is placed elsewhere, the association of ideas has always been treated as incidental to some other purpose and its real significance effectually minimized. As a result, there has never been a comprehensive overview of the relationship between this psychology and criticism and neoclassic and romantic modes of thought; it has not been clearly understood, nor has a genuine estimate of its impact on critical theory been carefully made. The following essay, an attempt to fill this gap in scholarship, has the sole purpose of describing and synthesizing the details of associationist criticism in eighteenth-century England from its beginnings with Hobbes and Locke to the peak of its development with Alison and Wordsworth.

Portions of this work have been published in several journals: on Hobbes, Locke, and Addison in *English Literary*

History, XII (1945), 290-315; on Hutcheson and Hume in *Studies in Philology*, XLIII (1946), 644-67; on Akenside in *Modern Language Notes*, LXII (1947), 166-73; on Alison in *Philological Quarterly*, XXVII (1948), 314-24; on Burke and Reid in *Modern Language Quarterly*, XV (1954), 125-36. I am grateful to the editors of these journals for granting me permission to reprint these sections and to incorporate them in the text. A related study of Samuel Johnson, not included in this essay, may be seen in *Modern Language Notes*, LXIX (1954), 170-76.

This history was undertaken and completed many years ago – many more than I care to remember – under the guidance of Raymond D. Havens at Johns Hopkins University. Nothing that I can now do can ever repay my debt to the late Professor Havens, for at a critical time in my life he gave me the opportunity to demonstrate my ability and thereby to initiate my career as a teacher and scholar. All that I can do at present is to indicate that I remember RDH and my debt to him, and to hope that this work will in some small way suggest my gratitude. Finally, I must mention my wife who loyally and unstintingly helped with moral support in the trying early years of marriage and career-making when this book was being written.

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I

DEFINITION

To the intelligent lay mind of the mid-eighteenth century, the term *association of ideas* usually meant *connection of ideas*. Such a definition, probably acceptable to almost everyone at the time, is found in Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) together with an illustrative sentence by Watts: "Association of ideas is of great importance, and may be of excellent use."¹ Although the illustration is unhappily chosen, yet indirectly it suggests the respectable position of the association psychology in Johnson's estimation. This definition, however, fails to indicate the nature of complex behavior of ideas in the mind and suggests nothing about the existence of principles of association, nothing, that is to say, about the ways in which these ideas may be connected or associated in the mind. Hence a sounder and more adequate description is that in Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* (1727), since here the nature of the connection in the mind and the controlling principles are both defined: "Association of *Ideas*, is where two or more ideas, constantly and immediately follow or succeed one another in the mind, so that the one shall almost infallibly produce the other; whether there be any natural relation between them, or not."² It is significant that Chambers describes two types of association, the one that is based on a "natural relation" or "real affinity",

¹ Cf. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), Pt. I, Sec. iv, "Of the Connexion or Association of Ideas".—*An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), Sec. iii, "Of the Connexions of Ideas". In the 1750 edition "connexions" becomes singular; thereafter it becomes "association".

² I use the fourth edition, London, 1741.

and the other that is based on an unnatural relation, so to speak, or on a chance or accidental association. He recognizes, thus, the rational as well as the irrational effects of association upon the mind, although he devotes much space in the article to a repetition of Locke's views on the psychopathic effects of "unnatural" and irrational associations.

Where there is a real affinity or connection in ideas, it is the excellency of the mind, to be able to collect, compare, and range them in order, in its enquiries: but where there is none, nor any cause to be assigned for their accompanying each other, but what is owing to mere accident or habit; this unnatural *association* becomes a great imperfection, and is, generally speaking, a main cause of error, or wrong deductions in reasoning. . . . [B]ut some loose and independent ideas are by education, custom, and the constant din of their party, so coupled in their minds, that they always appear there together: these they can no more separate in their thoughts, than if they were but one idea, and they operate as if they were so.

This description was acceptable to the Scottish philosophers at Edinburgh and was borrowed almost without verbal change for the brief definition in their *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1771).³

To the intelligent reader of the eighteenth century, then, association was synonymous with connection, and the special type of mental activity known as the association or connection of ideas was understood to occur when ideas are so joined in the mind that one idea almost invariably is succeeded by those which in some way are attracted to it. Furthermore, the attraction (to use Hume's word) between ideas is of two sorts, natural or unnatural. Ideas may naturally associate in the sense that they have an objective or "real affinity": they must have, we may infer, one or more qualities in common; they may be *like* (ferocity of lion and tiger) or *unlike* (lion and lamb), or they may be related as *cause* is to *effect* (sword and blood). On the other hand, ideas unnaturally associate in the sense that they have logically nothing in

³ The reader is also referred to an article on "Metaphysics", which, being merely an abridged reprint of *The Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, repeats Locke's analysis of the corrupting influences of association.

common and have been thrown together by accident or chance (lion and zoo). They are, we may say, merely *contiguous* to each other. In either case, natural or unnatural, rational or irrational, the underlying subjective characteristic of an association of ideas remains constant: when one idea or quality is perceived or experienced, it immediately calls to mind or suggests others to which it is in some manner related.

The philosophers and critics in the eighteenth century consistently employ these two types of the association of ideas in the mind in order to explain the way in which the mind or human nature is prone to act.

Locke uses only one principle of association, contiguity, and has emphasized only its irrational effects on the mind; Hartley, however, uses the same principle as the basis of all habits and customs, good as well as bad, and of the rational processes. It is Hartley's interpretation that is accepted today as representative of the "Principle (or the Doctrine) of the Association of Ideas". In the first half of the century, Hutcheson clearly uses this interpretation:

We may observe a natural involuntary determination to associate or bind together all such perceptions as have often occurred together, or have made at once a strong impression on the mind, so that they shall still attend each other, when any object afterwards excites any one or more of them.⁴

And in 1794 Walter White expresses the same and what may now be called the modern opinion. He specifically rejects an interpretation of the association of ideas that was given by the Scottish critics and metaphysicians from Hume to Alison.

By the *associating principle* I do not mean (as it appears to be understood by some metaphysicians) that faculty of the understanding, by which, on all occasions, the chain of our ideas is generated and preserved; nor, as referred to the genius of the poet, do I mean that active power, which passes rapidly through a variety of successive images, which discovers with so wonderful an acuteness their relation

⁴ *A System of Moral Philosophy* (London, 1755), I, 30. This book was written between 1733 and 1737.

and dependencies; and which combines them with such exquisite effect in all the pleasing forms of fiction and invention. In this indefinite and unlimited sense, the *association of Ideas*, when applied to the general operations of the mind, expresses little less than the whole arrangement of the reasoning principle, and as referred to the workings of imagination must signify all the embellishments of eloquence, and all the graces of poetry.

He selects Locke as the source of his definition; and it is this definition that he so cleverly uses in studying Shakespeare's unconscious imaginative processes.

In the theory of Mr. Locke, by the term *association* is *not* understood the combination of ideas *naturally* connected with each other; for these (as he observes) "it is the office and the excellency of our reason to form and preserve in that union and correspondence, which is founded on their peculiar beings." On the contrary, it is understood to express the combination of those ideas, which have *no* natural alliance or relation to each other, but which have been united only by chance, or by custom. Now it is observable that no task can be imposed on the understanding, of greater difficulty than to separate ideas thus accidentally combined; as the mind is commonly passive in admitting their original formation, and often totally unconscious of the force and principle of their union. . . . I define therefore the power of this *association* over the genius of the poet, to consist in supplying him with words and with ideas, which have been suggested to the mind by a principle of union unperceived by himself, and independent of the subject, to which they are applied.⁵

The total eighteenth-century picture, however, must not be distorted by an unhistorical application of modern standards or by a deliberate neglect of another interpretation. It should be remembered that in the eighteenth century "natural" principles of association other than the principle of casual contiguity were equally acceptable to many critics and philosophers. For explanations and analyses of these natural associations of ideas, Hobbes and Hume are responsible, although both, it must be admitted, also write about the influence of contiguity upon the mind. Because Hume's influence upon associationist critics was of paramount importance, it will be useful to present his account

⁵ *A Specimen of A Commentary on Shakespeare* (London, 1794), pp. 64-5, 68.

of these natural laws of association controlling the movement of ideas in our minds.⁶

Hume regards association as “a gentle force” which automatically unites simple ideas separately perceived and which also regulates the ideas in the imagination. “Were ideas entirely loose and unconnected, chance alone wou’d join them”; consequently, as there cannot be order when things are controlled by chance, the result is chaos. To avert confusion, nature provides that the proper simple ideas will be united in a complex one; and this it does through several associative laws:

The qualities, from which this association arises, and by which the mind is after this manner convey’d from one idea to another, are three, *viz.* Resemblance, Contiguity in time or place, and Cause and Effect. I believe it will not be very necessary to prove, that these qualities produce an association among ideas, and upon the appearance of one idea naturally introduce another. ’Tis plain, that in the course of our thinking, and in the constant revolution of our ideas, our imagination runs easily from one idea to any other that *resembles* it, and that this quality alone is to the fancy a sufficient bond and association. ’Tis likewise evident, that as the senses, in changing their objects, are necessitated to change them regularly, and take them as they lie *contiguous* to each other, the imagination must by long custom acquire the same method of thinking, and run along the parts of space and time in conceiving its objects. . . .

Of the three relations above-mention’d this of causation is the most extensive. Two objects may be consider’d as plac’d in this relation, as well when one is the cause of any of the actions or motions of the other, as when the former is the cause of the existence of the latter. For as that action or motion is nothing but the object itself, consider’d in a certain light, and as the object continues the same in all its different situations, ’tis easy to imagine how such an influence of objects upon one another may connect them in the imagination.⁷

This discussion is to be found in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739); but in the later *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) Hume briefly illustrates each of the laws:

⁶ A discussion of Hume’s views appears below, pp. 73-95.

⁷ *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, ed. Green and Grose (London, 1874), I, 319-20.

A picture naturally leads our thoughts to the original (resemblance): The mention of one apartment in a building naturally introduces an enquiry or discourse concerning the others (contiguity): And if we think of a wound, we can scarcely forbear reflecting on the pain which follows it (cause and effect).

In a footnote he also adds another general law of association, contrast or contrariety, which "may, perhaps, be considered as a mixture of Causation and Resemblance".⁸

By and large, therefore, two types of movement descriptive of the ways in which ideas are related to or succeed each other in the mind were agreed upon by the eighteenth-century philosophers and critics in the associationist tradition: (1) casual, or chance, or unnatural associations, according to contiguity in time and place; and (2) more regular, or natural associations, according to resemblance, contrariety, and causality. Locke, Gay, Hartley, Priestley, Whiter, and Wordsworth, Coleridge, and, no doubt, every critic in the nineteenth century accepted (or rejected) only the first. But, on the other hand, Hobbes, Hume, Kames, Gerard, Beattie, and Alison accept not only the first but also the second. Locke presumes that the process by which ideas, formerly dormant in the memory, are awakened into novel, unnatural, and irrational connections, is a cause of error. His view influenced Hutcheson and persisted until it was modified by the Reverend John Gay and David Hartley. With Gay and Hartley this type of association became the basis of all mental activity, of morality and of taste. But Hobbes and Hume believe that the mind functions normally and naturally by means of other principles of associations as well. Observing that ideas fall into association in regular and consistent order in addition to chance order, they thereby are able to deduce such governing laws as resemblance, contrariety, and causality. Thus were "discovered", as Hume boasted, the "natural" laws of association regulating the flow of linked ideas in the imagination. Since these laws are expressive of order and unity, they become highly significant, as will be seen, for

⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 18 and 18n.

the associationist reinterpretation by Kames, Beattie, and Alison, of neoclassic criticism and taste.

Even Aristotle, as Coleridge has noticed, has isolated three or four laws of association, contiguity in time and proximity in place, resemblance, and contrast.⁹ But of this source the eighteenth-century writers were generally unaware. Nor did they refer to Hobbes for their associationism. They preferred to trace the beginnings of association to Locke, who is unconcerned about the natural and orderly type of subjective associations, and to Hume.¹⁰

From Hobbes and Locke to Alison and Wordsworth, there were thinkers and critics who believed that principles of art must be founded on principles of human nature, or, to be more precise, that critical doctrines and standards of taste must be interpreted according to the accepted mental science of the period – the operations of the mind known as the association

⁹ Sir William Hamilton, *The Works of Thomas Reid* (Edinburgh, 1872), II, 890: "In England, indeed, we have a chapter in Mr. Coleridge's 'Biographia Literaria' entitled, *On the Law of Association – its history traced from Aristotle to Hartley*; but this, in so far as it is of any value, is a plagiarism, and a blundering plagiarism, from Maass."

¹⁰ I know of only two exceptions. The learned and scholarly James Harris distinguishes between memory, recollection, and imagination and refers to the source *Parva Naturalia* ("On Memory and Recollection"), where Aristotle analyzes the association of ideas. See *Hermes, or a Philosophical Inquiry concerning Universal Grammar* [1751] in *The Works of James Harris* (London, 1803), II, 355-7n. Beattie also observes [*Dissertations Moral and Critical* (Dublin, 1783), I, 11, 175] that the theory of association is not peculiar to "modern" philosophy: "The doctrine is not peculiar to modern philosophy. Aristotle, speaking of Recollection, or active remembrance, insinuates, with his usual brevity, that the relations, by which we are led from one thought to another, in tracing out, or *hunting out* (as he calls it) any particular thought which does not immediately occur, are chiefly three, *Resemblance, Contrariety, and Contiguity*. And this enumeration of the associating principles does not differ, in any thing material, from what is here given. I reduced them to five, *Resemblance, Contrariety, Nearness of Situation, the relation of Cause and Effect, and Custom or Habit*. Now the three last may very well be referred to that one which Aristotle calls *Contiguity*." For Aristotle's remarks see W. A. Hammond, *Aristotle's Psychology* (London, 1902), pp. 203-8. References to Hobbes's psychology in the eighteenth century are noted below, p. 17, fn. 1. It may be said that Aristotle first described the association of ideas but that Locke first used the term in English.

of ideas. The meaning of this term is here outlined at the expense of details. These details are now in order: they are conclusive proof of the extent to which the theory of association, beginning with Hobbes and Locke, affected the literary mind and permeated theories of criticism and taste in England during the eighteenth century.

II

THE BEGINNINGS: HOBBS AND LOCKE

In England the first important speculation upon the theory of the association of ideas can be traced to Hobbes and Locke. In 1783 a reviewer of Beattie's *Dissertations Moral and Critical* needed no acumen to remark that the association of ideas served as the basis of many contemporary theories of criticism; but he showed some originality in correcting a fallacy which credited only Locke with fathering the psychology:

It is but justice to the memory of a great philosopher and very original thinker of the last age to observe, that this doctrine, which is commonly considered as having been proposed by Mr. Locke, is to be found illustrated with great ingenuity in the philosophical writings of Hobbes.¹

To Hobbes we must therefore turn for the first important English statement on association and for its first important application to criticism.

¹ *Monthly Review*, LXIX (1783), 32. Thomas Reid also notes that the theory of association is suggested in Hobbes's works [*Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785) in *The Works of Thomas Reid*, ed. Sir William Hamilton (Edinburgh, 1872), I, 386a]: "I shall now make a few reflections upon a theory which has been applied to account for this successive train of thought in the mind. It was hinted by Mr. Hobbes, but has drawn more attention since it was distinctly explained by Mr. Hume." Priestley has the common notion and assigns to Locke the honor of having first observed the fact of association. See, for example, his *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind, on the Principle of the Association of Ideas* [1775] (London, 1790), p. xxv: "The mechanical association of ideas that have been frequently presented to the mind at the same time was, I believe, first noticed by Mr. Locke."

At the base of Hobbes's theory of association is the premise that motion determines all mental activity. Single images are formed by the outward motion of the senses counteracting the pressure of external objects moving towards the brain. This outward motion causes the apparent effect of fancying or imaging. "The nature of sense consists in motion", writes Hobbes in the *Elements of Philosophy*.² And when the object is removed from the senses, its image is retained in the imagination, which, Hobbes maintains, is only another name for memory.³ This image is but the "relic" of motion outwards; it is "decaying sense". Now, it is these decaying or weak images of sense, retained in the imagination, that move together in connected trains or sequences of thought. There are, thus, but two motions in Hobbes's philosophy: the first produces independent or separate ideas of sense; the second produces thought sequences in which the formerly separate ideas become dependent upon one another. "For besides sense, and thoughts, and the train of thoughts, the mind of man has no other motion."⁴

The connections between the dependent ideas in a train are not casual; they are determined by relations established by the original sensation. Or, as Hobbes says, the train of imaginations is governed by connections or "transitions" already in the imagination, which (acting as memory) retains the order of the sense perceptions: "But as we have no imagination, whereof we have not formerly had sense, in whole, or in part; so we have no transition from one imagination to another, whereof we never had the like before in our senses."⁵ This is nothing but the law of contiguity in space or time. In *Human*

² IV, xxv (I, 394), "Sense is a phantasm, made by the reaction and endeavour outwards in the organ of sense, caused by an endeavour inwards from the object, remaining for some time more or less". *Ibid.*, (I, 391). See also *Leviathan*, I, i (III, 1-2). All references in parentheses are to volume and page and all references before the parentheses are to the special divisions of that volume in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, ed. Molesworth (London, 1839-45). The works used are *Human Nature* (1640), *Leviathan* (1651), and *Elements of Philosophy* (1655).

³ *Lev.*, I, ii (III, 4-6); *Hum. Nat.*, iii (IV, 9); *Ele. of Philo.*, IV, xxxv (I, 396).

⁴ *Lev.*, I, iii (III, 16).

⁵ *Ibid.*, (III, 11).

Nature, the train of ideas in accordance with the principle of contiguity is more obvious:

The cause of the coherence or consequence of one conception to another, is their first coherence or consequence at that time when they are produced by sense: as for example, from St. Andrews the mind runneth to St. Peter, because their names are read together. . . and according to this example, the mind may run almost from anything to anything.⁶

Hobbes, however, also admits that associations occur in dreams, where ideas freely succeed one another with no apparent law. This train of ideas in dreams is unguided; the imagination wanders:

The. . . [train] is unguided, without design, and inconstant; wherein there is no passionate thought, to govern and direct those that follow, to itself, as the end and scope of some desire or other passion: in which case the thoughts are said to wander, and seem impertinent one to another, as in a dream. . . . And yet in this wild ranging of the mind, a man may oft-times perceive the way of it, and the dependence of one thought upon another.⁷

Hobbes describes an additional principle or bond of association that is favorable to coherence. A guided train of ideas, he declares, is directed by passion to some end; and the imagination is apparently guided towards this end by logical transitions of cause and effect. This order of ideas is obviously unlike that in dreams, where there is "disorder and casual consequence of one conception or image to another". On the contrary, "when we are waking, the antecedent thought or conception introduceth, and is cause of the consequent, as the water followeth a man's finger upon a dry and level table; but in dreams there is commonly no coherence." Again, this causal chain of ideas is explicit in *Human Nature*:

But as in the sense the conception of cause and effect may succeed one another; so may they after sense in the imagination. . . the cause whereof is the appetite of them, who, having a conception of the end,

⁶ *Hum. Nat.*, ch. iv (IV, 15).

⁷ *Lev.*, I, iii (III, 12).

have next unto it a conception of the next means to that end: as, when a man, from a thought of honour to which he hath an appetite, cometh to the thought of wisdom, which is the next means thereunto; and from thence to the thought of study, which is the next means to wisdom.⁸

Moreover, after summing up the discussion of unregulated and regulated trains of thought in *Human Nature*, Hobbes also calls the coherent succession of ideas *discursion*.

The succession of conceptions in the mind, series or consequence of one after another, may be casual and incoherent, as in dreams for the most part; and it may be orderly, as when the former thought introduceth the latter; and this is discourse of the mind. But because the word discourse is commonly taken for the coherence and consequence of words, I will, to avoid equivocation, call it *discursion*.⁹

There are, then, two general types of movement among the ideas in the imagination. These are the casual or random trains of ideas in dreams and the guided and regulated trains of ideas in *discursion* and coherent thought. Now, as Hobbes continues making his categories, there are two types of regulated trains of thought: remembrance and invention, each corresponding to a principle of association. Remembrance depends solely upon contiguity or the place and the time in which objects are perceived. That is to say, it is an act of memory by which stored ideas are recalled according to associative transitions, identifiable as contiguity but called simply place and time by Hobbes.

Sometimes a man seeks what he hath lost; and from that place, and time, wherein he misses it, his mind runs back, from place to place, and time to time, to find where, and when he had it; that is to say, to find some certain, and limited time and place, in which to begin a method of seeking. Again, from thence, his thoughts run over the same places and times, to find what action, or other occasion might make him lose it. This we call remembrance, or calling to mind: the Latins call it *reminiscentia*, as it were a *re-conning* of our former actions.¹⁰

⁸ *Hum. Nat.*, iii, iv (IV, 10-11, 15). The description of random succession of ideas in dreams is also found in *Elements of Philosophy*, IV, xxv (I, 399-400).

⁹ *Hum. Nat.*, iv (IV, 14f.).

¹⁰ *Lev.*, I, iii (III, 14).

This activity is compared to that of "a spaniel [that] ranges the field, till he find a scent; or [to that of] a man [who] should run over the alphabet, to start a rhyme".¹¹

Invention, however, is not controlled by the spatial or temporal relations of the original perception; it arranges ideas itself in accordance with cause and effect transitions. To be more explicit, this "train of regulated thoughts" operates by arranging causes for imagined effects, or vice versa, by studying effects in order to ascertain causes: "when of an effect imagined we seek the causes, or means that produce it . . . [and] when imagining any thing whatsoever, we seek all the possible effects, that can by it be produced; that is to say, we imagine what we can do with it, when we have it." In both cases, the mind *seeks* or *invents* an orderly succession of ideas.

In sum, the discourse of the mind, when it is governed by design, is nothing but seeking, or the faculty of invention, which the Latins call *sagacitas*, and *soleritia*; a hunting out of the causes, of some effect, present or past; or of the effects, of some present or past cause.¹²

Another class of guided, coherent thought is listed in *Human Nature*. This is ranging, which, in the *Leviathan*, had been subordinated to remembrance: Hobbes there likened it to "a spaniel [that] ranges the field". But in the earlier-composed *Human Nature*, ranging apparently describes the activity of mind midway between direction forwards and direction backwards to some definite end. Ranging can begin anywhere within a series of ideas; its activity, almost haphazard, almost unguided, lacks the direction of emotion. Examples of ranging occur when "a man casteth his eye upon the ground, to look about for some small thing lost; the hounds casting about a fault in hunting; and the ranging of spaniels". The transitions in this type of train are apparently neither governed by any clear law nor directed to any specific end. If for nothing else, this train of ideas is important in that it provided Dryden with a splendid figure, used to such excellent effect in the Preface to *Annus*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Lev.*, I, iii (III, 13-4).

Mirabilis (1667).¹³ In *Human Nature*, furthermore, Hobbes also expresses more clearly than in *Leviathan* the emotional direction of invention and remembrance. Invention is said to occur "when the appetite giveth a man his beginning . . . where honour to which a man hath appetite, maketh him think upon the next means of attaining it, and that again of the next, etc." Remembrance, however, is the succession "beginning with the appetite to recover something lost, proceeding from the present backward, from thought of the place where we miss at, to the thought of the place from whence we came last."¹⁴

There are, we have noticed, three possible ways in which the ideas in the imagination can be regulated: these are the order of original perception or contiguity in time and in place, and the dependent relations of cause and effect or means to ends. In addition to these connections between thoughts in a train, Hobbes now suggests a fourth, resemblance, which describes the ease and speed that ideas are connected in the mind and, as we shall see, is the source of the "wild" imagination. In the *Leviathan*, for example, Hobbes notes four ways of examining ideas in succession: these are "like one another, or in what they be unlike, or what they serve for, or how they serve to such a purpose". The first, resemblance, produces fancy; the second, perhaps contrast, produces judgment. The third and the fourth, although unelaborated, are no doubt means to ends or fitness, which has already been mentioned.¹⁵

¹³ This figure occurs twice in Dryden's criticism. Ker, *Essays of John Dryden* (Oxford, 1900), I, 8, 14: – *Epistle Dedicatory of the Rival Ladies* (1664): "For imagination in a poet is a faculty so wild and lawless, that like an high-ranging spaniel, it must have clogs [rhymes] tied to it, lest it outrun the judgment." Preface to *Annus Mirabilis*: "The composition of all poems is, or ought to be, of wit; and wit in the poet, or *Wit writing*, (if you will give me leave to use a school distinction), is no other than the faculty of imagination in the writer, which, like a nimble spaniel, beats over and ranges through the field of memory till it springs the quarry it hunted after; or, without metaphor, which searches over all the memory for the species or ideas of those things which it designs to represent."

¹⁴ *Hum. Nat.*, iv (IV, 15-6).

¹⁵ *Lev.*, I, viii (III, 57). Only this sentence appears on fitness: "There is required also an often application of his thoughts to their end; that is to say, to some use to be made of them."

A good fancy is one that produces original resemblances or similitudes. "Those that observe their similitudes, in case they be such as are but rarely observed by others, are said to have a *good wit*; by which, in this occasion, is meant a *good fancy*."¹⁶ "He that observes readily the likenesses of things of different natures, or that are very remote from one another, is said to have a good fancy."¹⁷ In *Human Nature* this original fancy accounts for figures of speech and is clearly connected with the processes of art:

The contrary hereunto [of dulness], is that quick ranging of mind described in Chapter iv, section 3, which is joined with curiosity of comparing the things that come into the mind, one with another: in which comparison, a man delighteth himself . . . with finding unexpected *similitude* of things, otherwise much unlike, in which men place the excellency of *fancy*, and from whence proceed those grateful similies, metaphors, and other tropes, by which both poets and orators have it in their power to make things please or displease, and shew well or ill to others, as they like themselves. . . .¹⁸

Wit also means judgment, however, when it dissociates and discerns differences or "dissimilitude in things" apparently alike. It is exactly the opposite faculty from that of the fancy, which associates by means of resemblances. "But they that observe differences, and dissimilitudes; which is called *distinguishing*, and *discerning*, and *judging* between thing and thing; in case such discerning be not easy, are said to have a good judgment."¹⁹ Because fancy is not commended for itself, it must be constantly watched and checked by judgment: "The former, that is, fancy, without the help of judgment, is not commended as a virtue: but the latter, which is judgment, and discretion, is commended for itself, without the help of fancy."²⁰

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ele. of Philo.*, IV, xxv (I, 399).

¹⁸ *Hum. Nat.*, x (IV, 55).

¹⁹ *Lev.*, I, viii (III, 57). Cf. *Ele. of Philo.*, IV, xxv (I, 399): "So he is said to have a good judgment, that finds out the unlikenesses or differences of things that are like one another." *Human Nature*, x, (IV, 55-6), does not add much that is different.

²⁰ *Lev.*, *loc. cit.*

And so, he who has the ability to use his fancy can adorn his discourse with "apt metaphors" and rare inventions. A danger constantly present, however, is that the exuberant fancy will approach madness and run amok with countless resemblances and digressions. Thus Hobbes must needs use the judgment in order to see that only the proper images are associated by the fancy. Judgment and fancy are therefore equally necessary for art: the one checks on the unity and propriety of the other's resemblances or figures.

In a good poem, whether it be epic, or dramatic, as also in sonnets, epigrams, and other pieces, both judgment and fancy are required: but the fancy must be more eminent; because they please for the extravagancy; but ought not to displease by indiscretion.²¹

Thus, according to Hobbes's psychology, the total man is supposed to function when "inventing" an orderly work of art, which is, in substance, only an orderly succession of ideas. Appetite (passion), judgment, and fancy must all contribute their share, Hobbes implies in *Elements of Philosophy*, to the assembling of coherent and controlled associations that are taken from the large store of fading ideas in the memory:

For the thought or phantasm of the desired end *brings in* all the phantasms, that are means conducing to that end, and that in order backwards from the last to the first, and again forwards from the beginning to the end. But this supposeth both appetite and judgment to discern what means conduce to the end, which is gotten by experience; and experience is store of phantasms, arising from the sense of very many things.²²

²¹ *Lev.*, I, viii, (III, 58).

²² *Ele. of Philo.*, IV, xxv (I, 398). Cf. *Lev.*, I, ii (III, 6): "Much memory, or memory of many things, is called experience"; and *Answer to Davenant, post*, p. 28: "Experience begets memory." Bolingbroke seems to have borrowed a leaf from Hobbes in his *Essay Concerning the Extent and Reality of Human Knowledge* (1754) [*The Works of Henry St. John* (Dublin, 1793), III, 447]: "What is the juxta-position of ideas? What is that chain which connects, by intermediate ideas, that are links of it, ideas that are remote, but figurative stile? What else are those dormant, that is, sleeping pictures, which are wakened as it were, and brought into appearance by an act of the mind? what else are the pictures drawn there, but laid in fading colors?"

It is important to remember the close resemblance of this statement to Hobbes's critical testament in the *Answer to Davenant*, where judgment assembles and controls the associations of the poet's fancy – fancy, that is to say, is “guided by the Precepts of true Philosophy”.

In the course of his examination of natural wit, Hobbes emphasizes the importance of speed in making and arranging associations. Wit is judged by the rapidity in which associations are made. Natural wit consists in “celerity of imagining” and “steady direction to some approved end”,²³ while dullness or stupidity signifies “slowness of motion”, or “a slow imagination”. This difference in the rate in which images succeed each other in the imagination is caused, Hobbes suggests, by differences in emotions:

And this difference of quickness, is caused by the difference of men's passions; that love and dislike, some one thing, some another: and therefore some men's thoughts run one way, some another; and are held to, and observe differently the things that pass through their imagination.²⁴

And these differences proceed from differences in custom or education and the physical condition of the body.

The causes of this difference of wits, are in the passions; and the difference of passions proceedeth, partly from the different constitution of the body, and partly from different education. . . . It proceeds therefore from the passions, which are different, not only from the difference of men's complexions; but also from their difference of customs, and education.²⁵

²³ *Lev.*, I, viii (III, 56); *Hum. Nat.*, x (IV, 56). Previously he defines wit, which is of two sorts, natural and acquired (*Lev.*, *loc. cit.*): “By natural, I mean not, that which a man hath from his birth; for that is nothing else but sense; wherein men differ so little one from another, and from brute beasts, as it is not to be reckoned amongst virtues. But I mean that wit which is gotten by use only, and experience; without method, culture, or instruction.”

²⁴ *Lev.*, I, viii (III, 57).

²⁵ *Lev.*, I, viii (III, 61). There are four driving emotions or passions – power, riches, knowledge, honor – which direct the thoughts to different goals or objectives. With his customary realism, Hobbes would reduce all these to the first, “desire of power”. Cf. also *Hum. Nat.*, x (IV, 54).

Here, diversity, arising first from custom and education and the several passions, is immediately caused by the relative ease and speed with which the imagination associates images. As a uniformitarian and neoclassicist, Hobbes tries to limit the extremes of this subjective diversity. As we noted before, the fancy cannot be too quickly associative for it may run wild; therefore, it must constantly be curbed by the judgment. Such a conservative and neoclassic writer in the associationist tradition as Gerard follows Hobbes in this respect; but other associationists like Alison late in the eighteenth century cultivated a freely rambling imagination and emphasized those diversitarian aspects that helped undermine the rules and the methods of the ancients.

Up to this point in our analysis of Hobbes's use and explanation of the theory of association, we notice that the laws of association are already clearly defined. The terminology is not always the same, but obviously the meaning is in agreement with the usage of later writers. For association of ideas, Hobbes uses succession of ideas, train of imaginations, or discursion. Coherent, regular successions of ideas are primarily directed by passion; also, several connections or links, of which some will be translated later into laws of association, unite separate ideas in the mind, and are known as time and place, cause and effect (antecedent and consequent, means to ends), and lastly, resemblance.²⁶ Finally, Hobbes be-

²⁶ Thorpe correctly makes *cohesion* the equivalent of contiguity in time and place; see *The Aesthetic Theory of Thomas Hobbes* (Ann Arbor, 1940), p. 91. *Elements of Philosophy*, IV, xxv (I, 397-8): "Now it is not without cause, nor so casual a thing as many perhaps think it, that phantasms in this their great variety proceed from one another; and that the same phantasms sometimes bring into the mind other phantasms like themselves, and at other times extremely unlike. *For in the motion of any continued body, one part follows another by cohesion*; and therefore, whilst we turn our eyes and other organs successively to many objects, the motion which was made by every one of them remaining, the phantasms are renewed as often as any one of those motions comes to be predominant above the rest; and they become predominant in the same order in which at any time formerly they were generated by sense. So that when by length of time very many phantasms have been generated within us by sense, then almost any thought may arise from any other thought; inso-

believes that the regulated train of ideas with definite design in view is the product of invention. And as invention uses ideas long in the memory and is unaffected by original contiguity, it connects ideas by the principle of cause and effect or means to ends.

Furthermore, we have seen that Hobbes's philosophy admits the need in art for fancy's similitudes or associated ideas in conjunction with judgment's correcting discretion. This resembling fancy is an active power and must be distinguished from the passive fancy (memory) which merely stores up the ideas of the senses; but both memory and fancy nevertheless function in accordance with the laws of association. Therefore, only in relation to the theory of association of ideas can their use in the notable passage on judgment and fancy in the *Answer to Davenant* (1650) be correctly evaluated. As applied to thoughts, ideas, and images, dependent upon or united with one another, and moving in the mind according to certain and clearly defined types of association, Hobbes's theory of motion supplies the philosophic gloss for the text. This passage, so rich in meaning, sums up every important idea in his associative system.²⁷

The quotation that describes fancy's manner of functioning is long; but because it illustrates Hobbes's exceptional awareness of the literary uses of his theory of associated ideas, it can be quoted without distortion only in its entirety.

In the text, it will be observed that judgment examines and registers the images in memory's storehouse according to several types of connections, "order [logical order of reason?], causes, uses, differences [contrasts], and resemblances". The motion of the good fancy is determined, for it travels quickly and widely in the memory and among the copious materials or images already pre-arranged there by the judgment, that is (as he writes

much that it may seem to be a thing indifferent and casual, which thought shall follow which."

²⁷ It is surprising to find that in his accurate analysis of this passage Thorpe overlooks the patterns of association. (*Op. cit.*, pp. 107-8.) Hobbes's use of the "laws of association" is noted by R. L. Brett, "The Third Earl of Shaftesbury as a Literary Critic", *MLR*, XXXVII (1942), 134.

in the next sentence), “discreetly ordered & perfectly registered in the memory”.

Time and Education beget experience; Experience begets memory; Memory begets Judgement and Fancy: Judgement begets the strength and structure, and Fancy begets the ornaments of a Poem. The Ancients therefore fabled not absurdly in making memory the Mother of the Muses. For memory is the World (though not really, yet so as in a looking glass) in which the Judgement, the severer Sister, busieth her self in a grave and rigid examination of all the parts of Nature, and in registering by Letters their order, causes, uses, differences, and resemblances; Whereby the Fancy, when any work of art is to be performed, findes her materials at hand and prepared for use, and needs no more than a swift motion over them, that what she wants, and is there to be had, may not lie too long unespied.

In this mechanical way, the quick fancy is enabled, without much trouble and without going wild, to beget the necessary ornaments of a poem from the memory. Furthermore, the “philosophy” mentioned by Hobbes may be only the mechanist system of rational and orderly motion and connection, so thoroughly explained in his philosophical treatises, *Human Nature*, *Leviathan*, and *Elements of Philosophy*. Fancy thus follows the ways of this philosophy, the paths of reason and judgment, or, as Hobbes writes, fancy “has traced the ways of true Philosophy”.

So that when she seemeth to fly from one Indies to the other, and from Heaven to Earth, and to penetrate into the hardest matter and obscurest places, into the future and into her self, and all this in a point of time, the voyage is not very great, her self being all she seeks; and her wonderful celerity consisteth not so much in motion as in copious Imagery discreetly ordered & perfectly registered in the memory, which most men under the name of Philosophy have a glimpse of, and is pretended to by many that, grosly mistaking her, embrace contention in her place. But so far forth as the Fancy of man has traced the ways of true Philosophy, so far it hath produced very marvellous effects to the benefit of mankind. All that is beautiful or defensible in building, or marvellous in Engines and Instruments of motion, whatsoever commodity men receive from the observations of the Heavens, from the description of the Earth, from the account of Time, from

walking on the Seas, and whatsoever distinguisheth the civility of Europe from the Barbarity of the American savages, is the workmanship of Fancy but guided by the Precepts of true Philosophy.

According to Hobbes, fancy not only uses resemblance (as he had before explained), but other principles of association or connection as well. Thus it is capable of invention (anticipating Gerard's discussion of the associative and inventive imagination), previously described by Hobbes as regulated and coherent trains of thoughts governed by unifying design and cause and effect. And so the creative artist is an inventor and may be considered as one who is both the fanciful poet and the rational philosopher, for he exhibits two powers while he invents a regular sequence of imaginations, in this case, a heroic poem: the poetic power or fancy enables him "to place & connect" the ornaments, which is half of the "matter"; while the philosophic power or judgment enables him "to furnish and square" these images or ornaments in terms of the moral end desired, the other half of the "matter". The "matter" of the poem consists, therefore, in the "body and Soul" [design, end, structure], and "colour and shadow" [ornament, expression, figures, tropes, etc.]. And, finally, to round out the idea, the "matter", or design and ornaments, is ultimately dependent upon memory's "Store" of ideas.

But where these precepts fail, as they have hitherto failed in the doctrine of Moral virtue, there the architect, Fancy, must take the Philosophers part upon her self. He therefore that undertakes an Heroick Poem, which is to exhibite a venerable & amiable Image of Heroick virtue, must not only be the Poet, to place & connect, but also the Philosopher, to furnish and square his matter, that is, to make both Body and Soul, colour and shadow of his Poem out of his own Store: Which how well you have performed I am now considering.²⁸

²⁸ J. E. Spingarn, *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1908), II, 59-60. In the later *Vertues of an Heroique Poem* (1675) Hobbes's account of fancy is not so complex. Although it gives the superficial explanation of the imagination flying "abroad swiftly to fetch in both Matter and Words" under the control of judgment, this account is not inconsistent with his previous analyses. See Spingarn, II, 67, 70.