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3.1 Análisis Diacrónico

3.1.1 Hume and Julius Caesar

Los artículos *Hume and Julius Caesar* y “*Whatever has a beginning of existence must have a cause*”: *Hume’s Argument Exposed* de Anscombe, fueron publicados en la revista académica *Analysis* en octubre de 1973 y abril de 1974 respectivamente. Ambos están relacionados por el tema de la causalidad en Hume. En el trasfondo de los dos artículos está otro documento no publicado hasta 2011 con el título *Hume on causality: introductory*.

Una de las actitudes características de Anscombe es su tendencia a quedar atraída por preguntas que representan cuestiones profundas, incluso en discusiones cuyos argumentos, método o conclusiones no le parecen tan interesantes.

Un autor que suele tener este efecto en ella es Hume. En *Modern Moral Philosophy* dice:

Las características de la filosofía de Hume que he mencionado, como muchas otras de sus características, me hacen inclinarme a pensar que Hume era un simple —brillante— sofista; y sus procedimientos son ciertamente sofísticos. Sin embargo me veo forzada, no a retrac-

tarme, sino a añadir a este juicio por la peculiaridad del filosofar de Hume: a saber, que aunque llega a sus conclusiones —con las que está enamorado— por métodos sofísticos, sus consideraciones constantemente abren problemas bien profundos e importantes. Frecuentemente es el caso que en el acto de exhibir la sofística uno se encuentra a sí mismo notando temas que merecen mucha exploración: lo obvio queda necesitado de investigación como resultado de los puntos que Hume pretende haber hecho.¹

En el artículo *Hume and Julius Caesar* la discusión que capta el interés de Anscombe se encuentra en la sección IV de la tercera parte del *Treatise of Human Nature* sobre el tema de la justificación de nuestro creer en cuestiones que están más allá de nuestra experiencia y memoria. Anscombe cita el texto de Hume como sigue:

Quando inferimos efectos partiendo de causas debemos establecer la existencia de estas causas...ya sea por la percepción inmediata de nuestra memoria o sentidos, o por la inferencia partiendo de otras causas; causas que debemos explicar de la misma manera por una impresión presente, o por una inferencia partiendo de sus causas, y así sucesivamente hasta que lleguemos a un objeto que vemos o recordamos. Es imposible para nosotros proseguir en nuestras inferencias

¹ **anscombe1981mmph**: The features of Hume's philosophy which I have mentioned, like many other features of it, would incline me to think that Hume was a mere —brilliant— sophist; and his procedures are certainly sophistical. But I am forced, not to reverse, but to add to this judgement by a peculiarity of Hume's philosophizing: namely that, although he reaches his conclusions —with which he is in love— by sophistical methods, his considerations constantly open up very deep and important problems. It is often the case that in the act of exhibiting the sophistry one finds oneself noticing matters which deserve a lot of exploring: the obvious stands in need of investigation as a result of the points that Hume pretends to have made.

al infinito, y lo único que puede detenerlas es una impresión de la memoria o los sentidos más allá de la cual no existe espacio para la duda o indagación.²

Ya en la sección II del *Treatise* Hume ha planteado cómo es la causalidad la conexión que nos asegura la existencia o acción de un objeto que es seguido o precedido por la existencia o acción de otro.³

Ahora en la sección IV esta relación de causa y efecto será tomada como un principio de asociación de ideas según el cual es posible inferir desde la impresión de alguna cosa, una idea sobre otra cosa.

Desde esta noción de causalidad se explica la posibilidad de acceder a hechos más allá de nuestra experiencia; estos son inferencias de efectos desde sus causas. De este modo: «Para Hume, la relación de causa y efecto es el único puente por el que se puede alcanzar creer en cuestiones más allá de nuestras impresiones presentes o memorias.»⁴

El planteamiento que Hume establece ahora es que al realizar estas inferencias es necesario establecer la existencia de las causas

Para ilustrar su propuesta Hume hace una invitación interesante: «ele-

² **anscombe1981hjc** When we infer effects from causes, we must establish the existence of these causes...either by an immediate perception of our memory or senses, or by an inference from other causes; which causes we must ascertain in the same manner either by a present impression, or by an inference from their causes and so on, until we arrive at some object which we see or remember. 'Tis impossible for us to carry on our inferences *in infinitum*, and the only thing that can stop them, is an impression of the memory or senses, beyond which there is no room for doubt or enquiry. (Selby-Bigge's edition, pp. 82–3)

³ Cf. *Treatise* Sección II Parte III: 'Tis only causation, which produces such a connexion, as to give us assurance from the existence or action of one object, that 'twas follow'd or preceded by any other existence or action; nor can the other two relations be ever made use of in reasoning, except so far as they either affect or are affected by it.

⁴ **anscombe1981hjc**: For Hume, the relation of cause and effect is the one bridge by which to reach belief in matters beyond our present impressions or memories.

gir cualquier punto en la historia, y considerar por qué razón lo creemos o rechazamos.»⁵ Acerca de una creencia histórica se nos invita a considerar sobre qué se sostiene su justificación. ¿Cuál es su fundamento? La opinión de Hume es que en definitiva se apoyan sobre impresiones de nuestros sentidos. Así lo describe diciendo:

Así, creemos que César fue asesinado en el Senado en los idus de Marzo; y esto porque el hecho está establecido basándose en el testimonio unánime de los historiadores, que concuerdan en asignar a este evento este tiempo y lugar precisos. Aquí ciertos caracteres y letras se hallan presentes a nuestra memoria o sentidos; caracteres que recordamos igualmente que han sido usados como signos de ciertas ideas; y estas ideas estuvieron ya en las mentes de los que se hallaron inmediatamente presentes a esta acción y que obtuvieron las ideas directamente de su existencia; o fueron derivadas del testimonio de otros, y éstas a su vez de otro testimonio, por una graduación visible, hasta llegar a los que fueron testigos oculares y espectadores del suceso. Es manifiesto que toda esta cadena de argumentos o conexión de causas y efectos se halla fundada en un principio en los caracteres o letras que son vistos o recordados y que sin la autoridad de la memoria o los sentidos nuestro razonamiento entero sería quimérico o carecería de fundamento.⁶

⁵**humetreatise**: chuse any point of history, and consider for what reason we either believe or reject it.

⁶**humetratise**: Thus we believe that Cæsar was kill'd in the senate-house on the ides of March; and that because this fact is establish'd on the unanimous testimony of historians, who agree to assign this precise time and place to that event. Here are certain characters and letters present either to our memory or senses; which characters we likewise remember to have been us'd as the signs of certain ideas; and these ideas were either in the minds of such as were immediately

La reacción de Anscombe a esta propuesta de Hume es inmediata: «Esto no es inferir efectos partiendo de sus causas, sino más bien causas desde los efectos.»⁷ Es decir, el ejemplo histórico de Hume consiste en una inferencia de la causa original, el asesinato de Julio César desde su efecto remoto que es nuestra percepción en el presente de ciertas letras que leemos.

Creemos en el asesinato del César porque lo inferimos como la causa última en una cadena causal terminando en nuestra percepción de ciertas oraciones que leemos. El hecho de que estemos leyendo esta información es la percepción que justifica la creencia de que hay una cadena de causas y efectos que culminan en esta experiencia.

Esta inferencia desde nuestra impresión presente hasta la causa original pasa a través de una cadena de efectos de causas, que son efectos de causas...¿Dónde empieza la cadena? ¿Puede decirse que es nuestra percepción presente?

La imagen que Hume pretende ofrecer es la de una cadena fijada en sus dos extremos por algo distinto a los eslabones que la componen

sin embargo Hume no lo logra, más bien parece describir un voladizo, una estructura apoyada en un punto, pero

The picture is that of a chain which must be nailed by and to something different from the links of which it is composed. As the picture swims before

present at that action, and receiv'd the ideas directly from its existence; or they were deriv'd from the testimony of others, and that again from another testimony, by a visible gradation, 'till we arrive at those who were eye-witnesses and spectators of the event. 'Tis obvious all this chain of argument or connexion of causes and effects, is at first founded on those characters or letters, which are seen or remember'd, and that without the authority either of the memory or senses our whole reasoning wou'd be chimerical and without foundation.

⁷ **anscombe1981hjc**: This is not to infer effects from causes, but rather causes from effects.

the imagination, the chain even so hangs forlornly down—one remembers that hint of a nailing at the other end, where there were eyewitnesses of Caesar's assassination. But Hume cannot give us that picture. For the picture that he can give us, the ordinary idea of a dangling chain is unfortunate: that of a cantilever would be more satisfying. And no doubt the supported structure in a cantilever construction could consist of

we believe in the killing of Caesar in the Senate House because we infer it as ultimate cause in a chain of causality terminating in our perception of 'certain characters and letters'. Waiving the question (to be considered later) whether this is a reasonable account of belief in historical testimony, we may grant there is a chain of causality terminating in that perception, and that it is because of our perception of sentences telling us of that event that we believe it.

The end of the chain is the death of Caesar or the perception of it by eyewitnesses, not our perception; that was surely the beginning of the inference!

So after all there was reason to conceive the chain running the other way.

But then how do we justify the starting point?

Our charitable reconstruction has misfired. We must suppose ourselves to start with the familiar idea, merely as idea, of Caesar having been killed.

Now if we ask why we believe it we shall, as Hume does, point to historical testimony (the 'characters and letters'), which doesn't at this point figure

as what stops inference going on ad infinitum. However,

but we must reach a starting point in the justification of these inferences (and that starting point must be perception)

'Tis obvious all this chain of argument or connexion of causes and effects, is at first founded on those characters or letters, which are seen or remember'd, and that without the authority either of the memory or senses our whole reasoning wou'd be chimerical and without foundation. Every link of the chain wou'd in that case hang upon another; but there wou'd not be any thing fix'd to one end of it, capable of sustaining the whole; and consequently there wou'd be no belief nor evidence. And this actually is the case with all hypothetical arguments, or reasonings upon a supposition; there being in them, neither any present impression, nor belief of a real existence.

We must suppose ourselves to start with the familiar idea, merely as idea, of Caesar having been killed. Now if we ask why we believe it we shall, as Hume does, point to historical testimony (the 'characters and letters'), which doesn't at this point figure as what stops inference going on ad infinitum. However, if we want to explain the connection we shall form the idea of Caesar's death being recorded by eyewitnesses; and these records having been received by others, who transmitted an account ... etc. Here we really are arguing from the idea of an original cause to the idea of an effect; we are 'inferring effects from causes', though only in the sense of passing from the idea of the cause to the idea of the effect.

His argument then falls into two parts.

En segundo lugar, determina que estas inferencias no pueden continuar infinitamente. Si se tratara de mera relación especulativa de conceptos no representaría dificultad, pero se trata de creer, y la cadena no podría ofrecer una creencia si no tiene término.

Ahora realmente no hay dificultad en ir infinitamente, o en cualquier caso decir 'así sucesivamente infinitamente', si el 'inferir' es simplemente derivar la idea del efecto partiendo de su causa. Pero el inferir es más que eso —es creer. Es en conexión con esto que Hume dice 'esta cadena no puede seguir para siempre'⁸

First, a chain 'Since p, q, etc' in which p gives a believed-in (not perceived) cause and q an inferred effect, cannot go on for ever but must terminate in a proposition that is believed without inferring any consequences from it; and from this proposition we then work back in reverse order to p.

This is a particular form of a familiar argument that not everything can be argued from something else, that is: that it cannot be the case that everything is argued from something else. I believe p because I believe q because I believe r because I believe s —this cannot go on for ever; it must end in something which I believe, not because I believe something else. This argument appears to be correct.

Hume's second point is that not merely must the chain that he is concerned with come to an end somewhere, but its terminus must be of a different

⁸ **anscombe2011hoc**: Now there really is no difficulty about going on ad infinitum, or at any rate about saying 'and so on ad infinitum', if the 'inferring' is simply deriving the idea of the effect from that of the cause. But the inferring is more than that —it is believing. It is in connection with this that Hume is saying 'this chain can't go on for ever'.

kind from the other members. ... without the authority either of the memory or the senses our whole reasonings wou'd be chimerical and without foundation. Every link of the chain wou'd in that case hang upon another; but there wou'd not be anything fix'd to one end of it, capable of sustaining the whole; and consequently there wou'd be no belief or evidence.[27]

The second part of his argument, which says that the terminus must be of a different character from the links of the chain, is more doubtful than the first part which only says there must be a terminus. Hume does not think that I have to have a present perception (of memory or sense) in connection with my belief that Caesar was killed in the Senate House: we can 'reason upon our past conclusions and principles, without having recourse to those impressions from which they first arose.' The convictions, however, must have been produced by impressions, and 'all reasonings concerning causes and effects are originally deriv'd from some impression'.