

Hume's Scepticism and Realism

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## Abstract

In this paper, a novel interpretation of one of *the* problems of Hume scholarship is defended: his view of Metaphysical Realism or the belief in an external world (that there are ontologically and causally perception-independent, absolutely external and continued, *i.e.* Real entities). According to this interpretation, Hume's attitude in the domain of philosophy should be distinguished from his view in the domain of everyday life: Hume the philosopher suspends his judgement on Realism, whereas Hume the common man firmly believes in the existence of Real entities. The defended reading is thus a sceptical and Realist interpretation of Hume. As such, it belongs to the class of what can be called *no-single-Hume interpretations* (Richard H. Popkin, Robert J. Fogelin, Donald L.M. Baxter), by contrast to *single-Hume readings*, which include Realist (naturalist, New Humean) and the traditional Reid-Green interpretation (*i.e.* Hume believes that there are no Real entities). Hume's distinction between the domains of philosophy and everyday life, which is argued to be epistemological, is employed in order to reconcile his scepticism with his naturalism and constructive science of human nature. The paper pays special attention to the too much neglected *second profound argument against the senses* in Part 1, Section 12 of Hume's first *Enquiry* and the corresponding argument in Section 4, Part 4, Book 1 of the *Treatise*.

### 1. Introduction

As Don Garrett has observed (2005, xxv–xl and xxxiv), the relation between scepticism and naturalism in Hume’s thought has been the central question of Hume scholarship since Norman Kemp Smith’s ground-breaking *The Philosophy of David Hume* (1941). One of the essential aspects of this problem is Hume’s attitude to what is nowadays called Metaphysical Realism.<sup>1</sup> The Humean understanding of such Realism both in *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (Hereafter: *first Enquiry*) and *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Hereafter: *Treatise*) is that there are ontologically and causally (human) perception-independent, continued and absolutely external entities (EHU 12.7-8 and T 1.4.2.2).<sup>2</sup> Thus, Hume’s attitude to Realism is the same problem as his view of the problem of the external world. It is one of the most long-standing and central problems of reading and studying Hume’s philosophy – and indeed, of modern philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

The question of Realism is significant for interpreting Hume’s philosophy in general, and for his theory of the understanding and metaphysics, in particular. An instance of this is the question whether Hume is a materialist, mind-body dualist, or neither. Corporeal substance and individual bodies are paradigm cases of Real entities in early modern philosophy.<sup>4</sup> Thus, if Hume is a materialist or dualist, he must be a Realist, and if he is not a Realist, he cannot be a materialist or dualist. His view of the existence of Real entities is also connected to the discussion over Hume’s theory of causation. If Hume is not committed to Realism in any sense of commitment, he cannot be committed to the existence of anything

Real that would ground causation as regularity between events (e.g. Real powers and necessity). Hume's attitude to Realism is therefore relevant for the New Hume debate.<sup>5</sup>

In this paper, my aim is to argue for a novel solution to the traditional problem of Hume's view of Realism, and accordingly a novel interpretation of this part of his metaphysics, his theory of the understanding, and his view of the relation between scepticism and naturalism.<sup>6</sup> My main thesis is that Hume should be seen as both a sceptic and a Realist. His philosophical position is to suspend his judgement on the existence of Real entities, whereas his everyday view is to believe firmly in their being. Hume the philosopher is a non-Realist in the sense of not taking any stand on Realism, while Hume the common man is a Realist. My reading falls thus to the category of what I call below *no-single-Hume interpretations*, according to which more than one position ought to be attributed to his thinking in some respect. The key point in my reading is that there is a domain distinction between Hume's philosophical and everyday views. Suspension of judgement and belief in Realism are attitudes that belong to different domains: Hume's considered position in the philosophical domain, and his more natural view in the realm of everyday life.<sup>7</sup> This distinction has significant consequences – as will be seen below – mainly because it avoids attributing a contradiction to Hume.

My main thesis and argument for it elaborate on my published doctoral dissertation (Hakkarainen 2007). In §2 of the paper, I outline the different interpretations of Hume's view of Realism defended so far in the literature. I discuss reasons for them in §3, which forms an

essential part of my argument, i.e. comparing the interpretations with each other. It also includes a short summary of the sceptical argument against the senses at the end of Part 1, Section 12 (*Of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy*) of Hume's first *Enquiry* (EHU 12.15-6). As Hume's presentation of this argument is so brief in the first *Enquiry*, the summary must also take use of the earlier version of the argument in Section 4 (*Of the modern philosophy*), Part 4 of the first Book of Hume's *Treatise* (T 1.4.4.3-11 and 15). Both arguments begin with the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Following Hume's description closely, I call the first *Enquiry* version of the argument *the second profound argument against the senses*. This argument has been too much neglected in the literature compared with *the first profound argument against the senses* in EHU 12.7-14 and 16, and T 1.4.2 (*Of scepticism with regard to the senses*).<sup>8</sup> It is the second profound argument against the senses that poses the strongest sceptical challenge. My interpretation takes this sceptical argument seriously. I bring forward my view in §4.

I finish the paper by concluding that Hume's philosophical position cannot involve two central varieties of Realism in early modern philosophy: materialism and mind-body dualism. I also observe that my interpretation poses serious difficulties for any interpretation that takes Hume committed to anything Real that would ground causation (such as some New Humean readings).

## *2. Outline of Different Interpretations*

Formally, there are four possibilities of what Hume's doxastic attitude to Realism can

be. In the first place, he may believe (suppose, assume, or take for granted) that there are no Real entities. Let us call this the *negatively dogmatic* attitude because in it, Hume holds a belief, *dogma*, that not-*p*. In other words, he rejects Realism or denies the existence of Real entities. The second possibility is that Hume believes in their existence. He then affirms Realism and is *positively dogmatic* on the issue. Thirdly, Hume may be a genuine *sceptic* concerning Realism: his attitude is to suspend his belief in or judgement on the existence of Real entities. The last option in principle is some combination of these three. Hume is, for example, both a sceptic and positively dogmatic on Realism. As these combinative accounts attribute more than one position to Hume, I will call them *no-single-Hume interpretations, readings, or accounts* - metaphorically speaking, there is not just one Hume.

It was once the prevalent view that Hume denies the existence of Real entities: that he is negatively dogmatic. This is part of the Reid-Green line of interpretation, which sees Hume as a destructive thinker and negative dogmatist across the board.<sup>9</sup> At the moment, the positively dogmatic account is by far the most popular among Hume scholars. It is part of both the naturalist and New Humean readings<sup>10</sup>, and also what can be called *dialectic interpretations* (such as those of Annette Baier and Donald W. Livingston, as explained below).

According to the father of the naturalist Hume interpretation, Kemp Smith, the belief in the existence of Real entities is one of the 'natural', fundamental human beliefs. It is involuntary, universal and practically necessary, an inevitable fact of the human condition.

As a result, no sceptical argument can undermine it. (Kemp Smith 2005, 124 and 126) Later, Barry Stroud has famously defended this interpretation in his book and especially in his recent article (1977, 115-7, and 2006, 339-51 and 340-5). The involuntariness thesis and Realist interpretation are also endorsed by Garrett, most clearly in 2004 (68-98, 83 and 90).

Wright's and Strawson's strategies for attributing commitment to the existence of in Real entities to Hume turns on Hume's theory of ideas providing means for supposing their existence even after the sceptical challenge (as explained below).

According to the dialectic readings of Hume by Livingston (1984, 2-4 and 9ff.), Baier (1991, 21 and 107), and William Edward Morris (2000, 96-102 and 106), the sceptical arguments that he presents are not really his own. Therefore the fact that Hume presents sceptical arguments against the belief in Real entities does not show that he rejects or suspends it. In fact, all of these commentators believe that Hume is a Realist.<sup>11</sup>

As far as I can tell, no one has so far defended the mere sceptical interpretation of Hume's attitude to Realism. However, it is one element in the *no-single-Hume interpretations* of Richard H. Popkin, Robert J. Fogelin, and Donald L.M. Baxter. All of them think that Hume is both a sceptic and a positive dogmatist regarding Real existence (I will go into the details of their views and arguments below).

### *3. Comparison of Interpretations*

#### 3.1 Negatively Dogmatic and Sceptical

On the one hand, it is not surprising that the negatively dogmatic interpretation was the

standard view in the light of a superficial reading of the first and second profound arguments against the senses in the first *Enquiry* and *Of scepticism with regard to the senses* (1.4.2), *Of the modern philosophy* (1.4.4), and *Conclusion of this book* (1.4.7) in the *Treatise*. On the other hand, this state of affairs is almost astonishing because of the fact that there just is no passage where Hume explicitly states that there are no Real entities. The closest he comes to this is in the last sentence of T 1.4.4: 'When we exclude these sensible qualities there remains nothing in the universe, which has such [Real] an existence.' (T 1.4.4.15) Nonetheless, putting this passage into its context – the conclusion of the argument at T 1.4.4 – challenges whether Hume is really signalling rejection of Real existence here. As will be seen below, the argument does not in fact sanction the denial of Real entities.

The negatively dogmatic reading of Hume in this question has thus insufficient textual basis. If there is a textually justified interpretation, that ought then to be preferred to it. In this respect, the mere sceptical interpretation has a slight advantage as I will show below. However, it suffers from another problem, which it shares with the negatively dogmatic reading: they have difficulties in explaining the indisputable naturalist element in Hume's thought. In the case of Real entities, this element is manifest in what I call *the involuntariness passages*.

### 3.2 Involuntariness Passages

Most of these passages are so well known that it suffices to consider them briefly. In EHU 12.23, Hume states that the only tendency that the Pyrrhonian arguments can have is to

show 'the whimsical condition of mankind.' We must act, reason, and believe although we cannot found these operations upon any certain basis (or refute the arguments against them). The natural reading of this passage is that it also alludes to the belief in the existence of Real entities. This is therefore an involuntary, uncertain belief against which there are irrefutable arguments.

In a familiar passage in *An Abstract of a Book lately published, entitled. A Treatise of Human Nature* (Hereafter: *Abstract*), Hume concludes that nature always overcomes Pyrrhonism and compels us to assent to external existence (*Abs.*27).<sup>12</sup> Equally famously, he begins his explanation of the belief in Direct Realism in the *Treatise* by asserting that 'tis in vain to ask, *Whether there be body or not?* That is a point, which we must take for granted in all our reasonings. (T 1.4.2.1)' The sceptic

'must assent to the principle concerning the existence of body, tho' he cannot pretend by any arguments of philosophy to maintain its veracity. Nature has not left this to his choice, and has doubtless, esteem'd it an affair of too great importance to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings and speculations. (T 1.4.2.1)'

Despite the fact that Hume expresses doubts about this statement in the penultimate paragraph of the Section, he finishes it with the following affirmation:

'For this reason I rely entirely upon them [the senses]; and take it for granted, whatever may be the reader's opinion at this present moment, that an hour hence he will be perswaded there is both an external and internal world. (T 1.4.2.57)'

Between these, Hume also writes that even philosophers have 'so great a propensity to believe' in Realism that faced with the non-Reality of perceptions, they invent Representative

Realism (T 1.4.2.56; see also 50).

Finally, just before proclaiming the whimsical condition of mankind, Hume writes that '[n]ature is always too strong for principle. (EHU 12.23)' This formulation is reminiscent of the well-known passage in the *Abstract*. The same point is also made when Hume discusses the second 'species' of Academical philosophy in EHU 12.25:

'To bring us to so salutary a determination [Academical philosophy], nothing can be more serviceable, than to be once thoroughly convinced of [...] the impossibility, that any thing, but the strong power of natural instinct, could free us from it [Pyrrhonism].'

All these passages suggest that the natural causes of the belief in Real entities are psychologically so strong that the belief cannot be permanently suspended or rejected. In some of them, Hume also appears to claim that he takes it as an unfounded, fundamental belief. Its logical and epistemological status seems to be then that of an axiom, which we take for granted.

Considering all these passages at the same time, is it possible to avoid concluding that Hume believes firmly in the existence of Real entities? Even a detailed analysis of these passages, perhaps revealing subtle differences between them, would not suffice to eliminate them completely. As a minimum, Hume believes that the natural instinct behind the belief in Realism is psychologically compelling, rendering perpetual resistance to it psychologically impossible. Hume's philosophy is naturalist in this respect at least.

### 3.3 Realist Interpretations

The strength of the Realist interpretations comes from Hume's avowals of Realism,

such as the involuntariness passages. The problem they face is what to do with the sceptical arguments that are equally or even more present in Hume's works.

The naturalist strategy to avoid this problem is to insist that the point of Hume's scepticism is rather to support or bring about naturalism than to argue for a sceptical or negatively dogmatic position. Kemp Smith thinks that the sceptical arguments are ground-clearing for naturalism, showing a 'mistaken endeavour of reason.' (2005, 116-21, 124-7 and 129-32) Garrett thinks that they result from Hume's initial naturalism, his cognitive psychology. In the end, however, Hume reaches a stable naturalist position and the sceptical challenge is overcome when reason mixes suitably with sentiment. (Garrett 1997, 89-90)

Wright's and Strawson's solution is to claim that even after the strongest sceptical arguments have done their work, there is room for Hume to be a Realist. Wright's strategy turns on what he calls 'inconceivable suppositions.' Even after the sceptical arguments that Hume presents, Wright suggests, it is possible for Hume to believe<sup>13</sup> in the existence of Real matter and bodies as having only primary qualities by virtue of supposing their existence as such – despite the fact that, strictly taken, entities of that kind are inconceivable or their notion even inconsistent. (Wright 1995, 226-7, 231-4, and 1983, 107-12) Strawson's move is to interpret Hume's theory of ideas as accommodating 'relative ideas.' Although it is not possible to conceive of Real entities in terms of descriptively contentful *positive* perceptions (impressions and their copies, ideas), we can suppose their existence as distinguished from other entities in virtue of relative ideas. The relative idea of Real entities is an idea *of*

imperceptible beings (some unknown 'X') causing our sense-impressions. It is this relative idea that provides content for the belief in the existence of Real entities, despite the fact that it does not give any contentful insight into their properties and nature. (Strawson 2002, 231-58, 239-42, and 1989, 49-53)

According to the dialectic readings, the sceptical arguments that Hume presents are not really arguments but form a dialectic which ends up with a belief in Real entities.

My objection to these Realist interpretations is that in the end they cannot evade the sceptical element in Hume's thought. Usually the discussion of scepticism with regard to the senses is restricted to the first profound argument against the senses (EHU 12.7-14 and 16) or T 1.4.2. This argument, concluding with the epistemically unjustified status of the belief in Real entities, is still quite compatible with the naturalist and New Humean interpretations. The real problem, however, lies in the second profound argument in the first *Enquiry* and *Of the modern philosophy* in the *Treatise* (1.4.4). It is these arguments of Hume that are not compatible with the Realist interpretation of his thinking.

First, these arguments advocate scepticism concerning *comprehensibility* instead of *justification*. The belief in the existence of Real entities is not merely epistemically unjustified; the very notion of Real entities is incomprehensible to the human mind. If this is not yet enough, the most severe problem for the Realist interpretations lies in the next point. Mainly because of the incomprehensibility of Real entities, according to these arguments of Hume, using what *he* considers to be the faculty of reason consistently results in an attitude

that is contradictory to believing in the existence of Real entities. Realist interpretations want to attribute both these principles – the proper exercise of the Humean conception of reason and Realism – to Hume. They thus render him an inconsistent philosopher. What is more, they make him self-consciously inconsistent because Hume thinks that assent to these two principles results in a contradiction. This I consider to be a decisive objection to any Realist interpretation of Hume proposed so far.

What is the contradiction at issue and why does it follow from the principle of the proper exercise of Humean reason? I discuss these questions in detail in the next section, but something can be said here, starting with the latter question. The second profound argument against the senses combines the results of two operations of Humean reason and two of its principles. The first operation is analysing the perceptions of extension and its modifications or 'primary qualities' that Real entities must have because they are by definition external to the mind. The second operation is drawing inductive-causal conclusions about the ontological status of 'secondary qualities', or what I think are more properly called *proper sensibles*. Proper sensibles are qualitative properties that are the immediate objects of perception of each particular sense. The two principles of Humean reason relevant here are two requirements of rationality: (1) rational beliefs must have comprehensible content, and (2) rational persons are consistent, that is, they do in fact follow at least one rational norm from 'ought' to 'is.'

According to Hume, following these two principles of Humean reason and pursuing

these two of its operations results in withdrawing from the belief in the existence of Real entities. This is therefore the rational attitude to Realism in Hume's view. If it is assumed, for the sake of the argument, that the belief in Realism is held simultaneously, we have a contradiction at hand. It is in fact contradictory to believe and not to believe in the same object at the same time. The contradiction arising from the conclusion of the second profound argument is thus between simultaneously believing in the existence of Real entities (material substance, for instance) and not holding that belief.

#### 3.4 The Second Profound Argument against the Senses

That this is the correct description of the second profound argument and that it is really Hume's own argument require justification. Within the limits of this paper, it is not possible to go into the extensive discussion that would be necessary for justifying these two affirmations in full. I have done it in another place (Hakkarainen 2007, chaps. 3.4 and 4.2.2). Yet the argument and reasons for Hume's endorsement of it can be outlined briefly.

My reconstruction of the second profound argument (as a sequence of propositions) is the following:

- (1) Our perceptions of all primary qualities other than extension are perceptions of extension [because they involve extension].
- (2) Our perceptions of extension are perceptions of proper sensibles [Hume's theory of the perceptions of extension in T 1.2].
- (3) Every perception of primary qualities is a perception of proper sensibles [from 1-2].
- (4) Perceptions of primary qualities are the only candidates for perceptions that resemble the Real properties of Real entities (matter and bodies).<sup>14</sup>
- (5) The Proper Sensibles Principle (PSP): perceptions of proper sensibles do not resemble the Real properties of Real entities (matter and bodies).
- (6) None of our perceptions resembles any Real property of Real entities (matter and bodies) [from 3-5].
- (7) Humans comprehend only by means of perceptions.
- (8) Entities without properties (bare entities) are incomprehensible.
- (9) Real entities (matter and bodies) are incomprehensible [from 6-8].
  - (10) The PSP is an inductive-causally rational tenet.
  - (11) The rest of the premises (1-9) is a matter of the analysis of perceptions.
  - (12) Humean reason, or the understanding, is the faculty of induction and the analysis of perceptions.
  - (13) The incomprehensibility of Real entities (matter and bodies) has been established by Humean reason [from 9-12].
- (14) Rational beliefs must have comprehensible content.
- (15) Rational persons ought not to believe in incomprehensible Real entities (matter and bodies) [from 14-15].
- (16) Rational persons are consistent in one respect at least: they follow the rational requirement of proposition (15).
- (17) Rational persons do not believe in the existence of Real entities (matter and bodies) [from 15-16].
- (18) It is contradictory to believe and not to believe at the same time.
- (19) It is contradictory to be rational and to believe in the existence of Real entities (matter and bodies) at the same time [from 17-18].

Steps (10) to (19), and especially (10) to (13), may appear strange because proposition (9) seems to be already established and what is established is a product of reason. However, these steps are necessary for reconstructing the second profound argument accurately and for my argument against the Realist Hume interpretations. Hume's formulations of the conclusion of the argument show that he takes the conclusion to concern the rational attitude to the existence of Real entities (EHU 12.16, T 1.4.4.15, and 1.4.7.4). Propositions (10) to (17) make explicit what in Hume's view follows from the incomprehensibility of Real entities regarding the rational attitude to their existence. First it is necessary to establish that the incomprehensibility of Real entities really is something that results from the proper exercise of the Humean conception of reason. Propositions (10) to (13) form therefore a meta argument with regard to the line of reasoning of (1) to (9). They are meant to show that we are not entitled to deny that Hume really endorses the second profound argument on the basis of the supposition that it relies on a non-Humean conception of reason. The next phase from (14) to (17) establishes what is the rational attitude to the existence of incomprehensible Real entities: withdrawal of assent to their existence. On the basis of this result, we can see that the final conclusion of the second profound argument is that, according to Hume, it is contradictory to be rational and a Realist at the same time.

If it is asked why the rational attitude to Realism is suspension instead of denying, it may be answered that Hume's text in EHU 12.15-6 does not support denial. Besides, it is rather dubious whether the vacuousness of the notion of a type of entities justifies believing

that they do not exist (let alone the assertion that their existence is impossible). How can we know or even understand what we are denying if the object of the denial transcends the boundaries of our comprehension?

The controversial points of Hume's endorsement of the second profound argument are premises (7), (10), (14), and the step from (15) and (16) to (17).<sup>15</sup> For instance, Strawson thinks that in Hume's view, comprehension is not exhausted by positive perceptions (impressions and their copies, ideas) and hence Hume's commitment to premise (7) is dubious. There are also 'relative ideas' in virtue of which it is possible to grasp imperceptible entities. (Strawson 2002, 239-40) Garrett's main objection to the claim that Hume fully endorses the Proper Sensibles Principle (10), or adopts it as his own, is that he does not ever speak about it as his own principle (1997, 220). Wright claims that not all Humean rational beliefs have comprehensible content (14) because sometimes there are good reasons to believe in inconceivable or even inconsistent suppositions. According to Wright, the supposition of Real matter and bodies with only primary qualities is of this kind: it is inconsistent and incomprehensible but still based on 'a systematic application of the principle of cause and effect.' (Wright 1995, 232) Finally (15 to 17), the standard naturalist point is that our psychology does not necessarily follow rational norms: consistency may require us not to believe in the existence of Real entities, but it does not follow that rational persons do in fact refrain from holding this belief. In Hume's view, we fail to follow these rational norms because it is psychologically impossible for us to refrain permanently from believing in the

existence of Real entities.

To cut a long story very short, my replies to these objections are the following. Against Strawson, the putative relative idea of Real matter and bodies is of *that imperceptible X* which causes sense-impressions about them. The problem with accepting this relative idea is that it is incompatible with Hume's view of the ideas of relations. Hume takes the ideas of relations to be complex (T 1.1.4.7), and thus requires that in order to understand a relation, there must be a perception of both *relata*. However, in the case of the putative relative idea of Real matter and bodies, there cannot be any perception of the other *relatum* in the supposed causal relation (as Strawson himself acknowledges). Hence there cannot be any idea of the relation and therefore it is not possible to distinguish this alleged relative idea from one of its three components, the positive idea of the sense-impression. Thus, the putative relative idea collapses into its positive idea component.<sup>16</sup> Even if it were admitted that the idea of this type of supposed causation is provided by the abstract idea of causation, this would not help.<sup>17</sup> As the abstract idea of causation cannot be of this specific type of (possible) causation – it must be of some other specific type – the resulting relative idea of Real matter is indeterminate. So it is not determinate enough to single out any *actually* existing entity or type of entity. The best it can do perhaps is to pick out a *possible* entity or type of entities. Besides, it is not even certain that it can single out a *determinate* type of possible entities – it may pick out, say, God instead of matter.<sup>18</sup> The putative relative idea of matter cannot therefore be legitimate in Hume's view.<sup>19</sup>

To Garrett, it may be replied that the textual evidence provides more support for the view that Hume does in fact assent to the inductive rationality of the PSP than it does for the supposition that he rejects it<sup>20</sup> – and his endorsement of its rationality (11) is sufficient for his subscription to the argument. My answer to Wright is that Hume does not explicitly employ any inconceivable supposition to avoid the conclusion of the second profound argument. So there is no specific textual evidence for Wright's interpretation here. In the end, the basic naturalist objection may be rebutted by the point that the second profound argument does not require permanent refraining from the belief in Real entities. Domain-indexed suspension is sufficient and Hume does not rule that out (EHU 12.15.n.32, 12.21, 22 and 23).

Otherwise I think that Hume's endorsement of the premises of the argument is rather uncontroversial. It starts by analysing the perceptions of putative primary qualities in a manner that accords with Hume's theory of the perception of extension in T 1.2. This analysis of perceptions is thus also a product of the consistent use of Humean reason or understanding. It is also a reasonable assumption that Hume thinks that bare entities are incomprehensible (especially when the alleged relative idea of Real matter is not legitimate in his view and his rejection of substratum in T 1.4.3) and simultaneous belief and non-belief are contradictory. Thus, if my account of the second profound argument is correct and if my replies to the objections are successful, it is indeed the case that this reasoning is Hume's own argument.<sup>21</sup> Nor is there any textual evidence against it being so. Hume's sole comments on the argument only support the view that he endorses it:

*'admit[s] of no answer. (EHU 12.15.n.32)'*

'they [human beings] are not able, by their most diligent enquiry, [...] to remove objections, which may be raised against them [Realism and inductive inference]. (EHU 12.23)'

For the Realist interpretations of Hume, this result causes grave problems. If they attribute both the consistent use of inductive, perception-analytical reason and Realism to him, according to this argument of Hume, they saddle him with 'a manifest contradiction. (T 1.4.7.4)'

### 3.5 No Single-Hume Interpretations

I presume that the Realist interpretations are not intended to render Hume inconsistent. Showing that they do would thus be a sufficient objection to these readings in their own right. Yet I think Hume's attitude to the contradiction between Realism and the proper use of reason should be considered.

First, attributing the contradiction to Hume would not be a problem perhaps if he accepted it with 'carelessness.' However, there are two reasons not to think that he does so. First, there is a fair amount of textual evidence that in general he does not accept contradictions in philosophy.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, textual evidence points at the opposite direction with regard to this particular contradiction. In the first *Enquiry*, Hume states that the second profound argument is 'derived from the most profound philosophy' and 'goes farther' than the first (EHU 12.15 and 16). As we have seen, he thinks that it is irrefutable (admits of no answer). The strongest evidence that Hume's attitude to the contradiction is serious rather than careless can be nevertheless found in the *Conclusion of Treatise 1*:

'Or in case we prefer neither of them [belief in Realism and consistent reasoning], but successively assent

to both, as is usual among philosophers, with what confidence can we afterwards usurp that glorious title, when we thus knowingly embrace a manifest contradiction?

This contradiction would be more excusable, were it compensated by any degree of solidity and satisfaction in the other parts of our reasoning. But the case is quite contrary. (T 1.4.7.4-5)<sup>23</sup>

Secondly, there is the possibility that Hume thinks that this is just how things are.

Philosophers cannot help but to be inconsistent even if they should not be; they must both believe in the existence of Real entities and reason consistently. The former is psychologically necessary and the latter what they ought to do as philosophers. The moral of the second profound argument would be that this is the human and philosophical condition.

Yet I think we should look for something better, i.e. a solution that allows Hume to avoid philosophical self-contradiction. In this respect, the *no-single-Hume interpretations* seem most promising. Without the threat of the contradiction, as I explain below, they can claim that Hume endorses both the existence of Real entities and proper exercise of reason because of the temporal, perspectival, attitude, or domain distinctions these accounts attribute to them. The *no-single-Hume interpretations* are not in tension with the first profound argument either, according to which the belief in the existence of Real entities is unjustified. In general, they do not have difficulty explaining the sceptical arguments that are present in Hume's works.

The question is then which *no-single-Hume interpretation* ought to be preferred. Let us first consider the merits and downsides of Popkin's, Fogelin's and Baxter's interpretations.

Popkin maintains (1980, 103) that Hume is 'the only 'consistent Pyrrhonian' sceptic.' In

the case of our main question, this means that at one time Hume suspends his judgement on the existence of Real entities; at another, he firmly believes in them. According to Popkin, Hume is both a sceptic and a positive dogmatist on the issue. When he is in his rational 'mood', by means of irrefutable sceptical arguments he comes to the conclusion that we ought to suspend our belief in Real entities. (Ibid. 112-5, 119-20, 126, 130 and 132) This belief cannot have any rational basis and it involves insolvable paradoxes (Ibid. 112 and 119-20).

Despite the fact that the rational mood is natural for philosophers (Ibid. 123 and 131), it is in the strong natural mood that Hume is a Realist. In this respect, Popkin repeats the basic naturalistic claim that our instincts force us to be Realists notwithstanding the irrefutable sceptical arguments (Ibid. 116, 119-20 and 123-6). Hume is the only consistent Pyrrhonist because he does only what nature compels him to do. In their lives, the ancient Pyrrhonists followed nature in the form of appearances – what seemed to them to be the case – but suspended judgement on the question of how things really are. Hume follows nature more consistently as he believes firmly when nature necessitates him to do so. Actually, Popkin goes so far as to claim that Hume believes only what nature makes him believe. (Ibid. 126-30 and 132)

Another circumstance with respect to which Hume is also a consistent Pyrrhonist is that since he does not suspend judgement and believe at the same time, but only during different periods of time, he is not subject to any contradiction.

The problem with Popkin's reading is that it is trivial or too simplistic. If it is meant to

point out that Hume is a determinist and thus the workings of the understanding are also completely determined by their causes, it is trivial (provided that Hume is a determinist). If Popkin's intention is that there is no room for free, self-reflective belief-formation based on evidence, the picture he draws about Hume is too simplistic. Hume clearly allows and endorses this kind of belief-formation. The best examples of it are his two famous statements in the first *Enquiry*:

'A wise man proportions [...] his belief to the evidence. (EHU 10.4)'

'philosophical decisions are nothing but the reflections of common life, methodized and corrected. (EHU 12.25)<sup>24</sup>

In his latest Hume article, which is a comment on Garrett's book, Fogelin defends a form of *no-single-Hume interpretation*. Actually, in his book of 1985, he already acknowledges his debt to Popkin and there are also hints of this kind of reading in both that book and a 1993 article (1985, xii, 149-50, and 1993, 113). However, it is only in the latest paper on this topic that he explicitly maintains a *no-single-Hume reading*. Fogelin's more mature view is that Hume is a 'radical perspectivist': his writings exhibit inconsistent positions depending on the perspective from which things are considered (1998, 164-7).<sup>25</sup> I interpret this to mean the following. Since no perspective is preferable to another (they are on a par in this respect), Hume does not have any final philosophical position on any issue; he merely has judgements depending on the perspective. From one point of view, Hume is a Realist; from another, he is not.

I will not go into the details of Fogelin's new interpretation. Suffice it to note two

things. First, Fogelin does not attribute any contradiction to Hume's philosophical positions because the inconsistent views are held from different perspectives (1998, 165-6). Secondly and relatedly, Fogelin also reads Hume as the first philosopher doing the 'natural history of philosophy.' (Ibid. 168) This means that especially with regard to Real entities and perceiving them with our senses, Hume's account should be taken as 'a sequence of philosophical perspectives', which unfold naturally when one is doing philosophy in 'an unrestricted manner.' (Ibid.)<sup>26</sup>

Fogelin can be criticised from the point of view of what Hume does in the first *Enquiry*. He does not merely proceed from one standpoint to another. With regard to induction, causality, miracles and scepticism at least, he has a clear intention to establish a final, considered position. Amid the various sceptical positions that he discusses, it is Academical philosophy that he endorses. Fogelin's later reading is therefore not convincing in the light of Hume's mature work on the understanding.

Recently, Baxter has deliberately followed in Popkin's footsteps and defended the view that Hume is a Pyrrhonist regarding the existence of Real entities. Baxter's interesting claim is that Hume's various remarks on the issue are best accounted for by making a subtle distinction between two kinds of assent. Baxter thinks that in this regard, Hume models himself on Sextus Empiricus who, according to Popkin and Michael Frede, distinguishes active endorsement from passive assent. (Baxter 2006, 115-6)

Applied to the case of Real entities, this means the following. On the one hand, Hume

suspends his active assent to their existence since it is epistemically unjustified – there are no reasons to support its truth. Actually, Baxter takes Hume to be a complete Pyrrhonist in this sense, suspending active endorsement of *every* belief due to the absence of reasons. However, on the other hand, Hume assents passively to the existence of Real entities because it is instinctive and almost irresistible. This passive endorsement is for Baxter then what the naturalistic interpretation takes as Humean, 'natural belief.' His contribution, which is close to Popkin, is to distinguish this following of natural impulses from the philosophical endorsement. The relevant point here, as in Popkin and Fogelin's latest interpretation, is that this is a way to avoid attributing any inconsistency to Hume. (2006, 114-7) As Baxter concisely puts it, '[i]n this sceptical way Hume takes for granted the existence of body.' (Ibid. 116)

Baxter's interpretation suffers from the same problem as Fogelin's radically perspectivist account: it is at odds with Hume's mature works. In the first place, Baxter also claims that Hume is a Pyrrhonist in the sense that he suspends his active, i.e. rational assent universally. The problem with this interpretation is that one of Hume's key points in EHU 12 is that he is not a Pyrrhonist in this sense (EHU 12.23-5). Besides, I think it is clear from Hume's mature works that he does not suspend all rational (active) assent; consider Hume's endorsement of proper inductive inferences, for instance.<sup>27</sup>

In the second place, Baxter's interpretation is not grounded in any distinction explicitly put forward by Hume – especially if more emphasis is put again on Hume's mature works

instead of his 'juvenile' *Treatise*. Although we may find the distinction between passive and active assent in Sextus Empiricus – if Popkin and Frede are right – Hume does not employ it *explicitly* anywhere. Hume's distinction between '*the sensitive*' and '*the cogitative part of our natures*' (T 1.4.1.8) is perhaps closest, but even this distinction disappears completely in Hume's mature works. Baxter is therefore going in the right direction, but his interpretation is too radical and there is no positive textual support for the specific distinction on which it is based; in this respect it is non-Humean.

#### *4. Sceptical and Realist Interpretation*

Instead, it is typical for Hume to make a distinction between everyday life and philosophy in its various forms.<sup>28</sup> Crucially, as I show below, in his mature works, Hume draws this distinction in the context of sceptical arguments, concerning both Realism and inductive inference. By contrast to Baxter's distinction of assents, therefore, we have good grounds for appealing to this distinction in the resolution of the problem that the second profound argument creates.

Hume employs different terms for philosophy and common life. In the essay *Of Essay-Writing*, they are 'Worlds', 'Countries', 'Dominions', and what Hume calls the '*conversible*' part of everyday life is characterised even as 'the Empire of Conversation' and philosophy as 'the Republic of Letters. (E, EW, 533 and 535)' In the first *Enquiry*, he uses 'sphere' for the realm of philosophy (EHU 12.22). So I think that it is justified to use 'sphere' and two of its synonyms in this connection, although Hume does not use the terms 'domain' and 'realm'

anywhere in his works. Hume's division between philosophy and everyday life can be thus described as the distinction between the domains, realms or spheres of philosophy and everyday life.

Hume understands this division as rather an epistemological than an ontological distinction. His point is not to draw a strict ontological divide between philosophy and everyday life as distinct entities. Even the philosopher who engages in the most abstract thinking is a plain man, too (EHU 1.6, T 1.4.2.36 and DNR 1.9). Philosophy is also in an intimate constructive interplay with everyday life, as Hume's two famous slogans state: philosophical decisions are only corrected and methodized reflections of common life (EHU 12.25; quoted above), and philosophical arguments are exacter and more careful instances of the same kind as everyday reasonings:

'everyone, even in common life, is constrained to have more or less of this philosophy; that from our earliest infancy we make continual advances in forming more general principles of conduct and reasoning; that the larger experience we acquire, and the stronger reason we are endowed with, we always render our principles the more general and comprehensive; and that what we call *philosophy* is nothing but a more regular and methodical operation of the same kind. To philosophize on such subjects is nothing essentially different from reasoning on common life; and we may only expect greater stability, if not greater truth, from our philosophy, on account of its exacter and more scrupulous method of proceeding.' (DNR 1.9; see also E, EW, 535).

The ground of Hume's distinction is thus in the relevant epistemic standards. The same rational capacities, notably inductive inference, are employed in both the domain of philosophy and the sphere of everyday life. The difference between these two domains

consists in the point that, as Hume says, in the philosophical domain the same rational capacities are followed in a more rigorous and systematic manner. The epistemic standards in philosophy are thus stricter than those that apply in everyday life: contradictions, for instance, are not permitted.<sup>29</sup> It should be pointed out, however, that even this distinction between epistemic standards is rather a *difference in degree* than *in kind*. In this respect, it is in principle possible for a common man to become a philosopher because he already possesses the needed rational capacities.

Since the Humean distinction on which this interpretation is based allows interaction between philosophy and common life, it does not suffer from a further problem in Baxter's account. It is hard to see how Baxter's active endorsement and passive assent are able to interact and to result from the same kind of rational capacity. In this respect as well, it is therefore preferable to use Hume's own distinction between philosophy and common life rather than Baxter's distinction from Sextus.

By distinguishing the attitude that Hume takes in the philosophical domain from his opinion within the realm of common life, it is possible to construct a satisfactory *no-single-Hume interpretation*. The basic idea in this reading is that in the domain of philosophy, Hume suspends his judgement on the existence of Real entities, whereas within the realm of everyday life he firmly believes in them. Or to put it more directly, Hume the philosopher is a sceptic and Hume the common man is a positive dogmatist with regard to Realism.<sup>30</sup> This account is able to avoid attributing the contradiction between rational withdrawal of assent to

Realism and simultaneous holding of that belief because of the different domains within which these attitudes are held: they are domain-indexed.<sup>31</sup>

The distinction involved in my *no-single-Hume interpretation* differs subtly from the distinction used in the three other *no-single-Hume readings*. In Popkin's account, Hume holds different attitudes to the same object, Realism, in distinct moments of time, while I think that he holds these attitudes in distinct domains and I do not take any stance on the temporal relations between the attitudes.<sup>32</sup> Baxter differs from me in drawing the distinction between the two kinds of assent to Realism and suspending the one while holding the other. According to my account, it is the same kind of assent that is suspended in the philosophical domain and entertained in the realm of everyday life. It is Fogelin's distinction of perspectives that is closest to mine. Actually, Fogelin does not say enough about perspectives for an exact description of the difference between his distinction between perspectives and my domain distinction. Formally, it is that according to Fogelin, Hume makes statements *from* different perspectives, whereas I think that he takes different attitudes *in* different domains. However, although our views come formally close to each other, they differ substantially. My view is that Hume may have preferences between the two domains.<sup>33</sup> Domains are spheres of belief-formation or cognitive commitment with different epistemic standards. For Fogelin, perspectives are in principle non-preferable, but he does not say what they are.

I think we should not go too far in comparing my interpretation of Hume with some contemporary trends in epistemology. Hume just does not say enough for constructing so

detailed interpretation that could match up with the detailed, technical discussion nowadays. As an interpretation, that would be textually unjustified. Besides, there is no room for that kind of discussion in this paper, which has to take on the competing Hume interpretations.

However, something can be said briefly here. According to John Hawthorne's and Jason Stanley's Subject Sensitive Invariantism (SSI), the content of the knowledge relation between a subject and a proposition is invariable. Whether it obtains is sensitive to the subject's practical interests, goals and presuppositions. The basic idea in its rival, Epistemic Contextualism (EC), defended by Keith DeRose and Stewart Cohen, for example, is that the content of the knowledge relation varies. It does not do so in relation to the subject's situation but to the context of conversant participants or knowledge attributers. This context determines relevant epistemic standards and depends on the participants' interests and presuppositions.<sup>34</sup>

My Hume interpretation is closer to SSI than to EC. If we put it in the contemporary terminology, doxastic relations such as 'knows' are invariant in their content: it is the same kind of attitude that is suspended and held in the different domains. Its obtaining depends on the epistemic standards of the subject's domain, not on the context of the knowledge attributers (to the subject). This is similar to SSI and clearly different from EC. There is nevertheless a difference between my interpretation and SSI: in the philosophical domain, the epistemic standard is not practicality but philosophical virtues like consistency. The practicality of the standards in everyday life is quite much like the subject's practical interests

and goals in SSI though.

All in all, when every circumstance I have identified is taken into consideration, this reading of Hume as a philosophical sceptic and an everyday positive dogmatist is the most satisfactory of those proposed so far.

(1) Among the four principal interpretations, it avoids the problem of the negatively dogmatic reading having no textual support. It has the same advantage as the mere sceptical interpretation having textual justification. The first point to be noted of this is that Hume says explicitly that his Academical philosophy involves suspension of judgement:

'The academics always talk of doubt and suspence of judgment. (EHU 5.1)'

In this light, it is reasonable to read Hume's use of 'doubt' as referring also to suspension in the corresponding passage in Section 12:

'In general, there is a degree of doubt, and caution, and modesty, which, in all kinds of scrutiny and decision, ought for ever to accompany a just reasoner. (EHU 12.24)'

Of course, these passages speak about or indicate suspension of judgement in general instead of the specific suspension of belief in the existence of Real entities. However, precisely because the import of the passages is general, the reading that Hume's Academical philosophy, his philosophical position, involves suspension of judgement on the existence of Real entities is consistent with them.

Besides, one of Hume's few comments on the second profound argument is that it '*produce[s] no conviction*. (EHU 12.15.n.32)' Although there might be other reasonable readings of this passage, it fits nicely with the conclusion of the second profound argument –

not believing in Real entities – and with Hume's philosophical position involving suspension of belief. Suspension is non-conviction. It also matches up perfectly with the general characteristic of Pyrrhonian arguments that they are intended to produce *epochê*, suspension of judgement and belief. Hume says in the footnote that it is the general sign of 'merely sceptical' arguments.

Against this interpretation, it might be asked why Hume does not bring his solution to the second profound argument forward if he has one. Hume is almost completely silent on his attitude to the two profound arguments in EHU 12. He presents them, refutes Pyrrhonism, and proceeds to Academical philosophy, which can be, in part, the result of Pyrrhonism. Nevertheless, here I would like to ask the reader to reflect on the very fact that Hume is silent. Which one of the interpretations of his philosophical position does his silence support more: suspension, affirming, or denying? If Hume the philosopher believes in the existence of Real entities, why does not he say it? Likewise, if he denies their existence, why does not he say so? But clearly his silence fits quite nicely with suspension of judgement. If one suspends his judgement on a problem, he may say so aloud. However, it is equally reasonable to express his attitude, or more precisely, his omission by keeping silent. Hume's silence therefore supports the sceptical rather than dogmatic readings of his philosophical position. And it may surprise the proponents of the Realist interpretation to notice that Hume's Academical philosophy does not involve any expressed commitment to Realism.

(2) My *no-single-Hume interpretation* does not suffer from the difficulty of the mere

sceptical and negatively dogmatic interpretations in explaining an important aspect of Hume's naturalism: the involuntariness passages; on the contrary, they can be incorporated into it. It can take advantage of the support these passages provide for the Realist readings, since it agrees that Hume is a Realist in common life. It also fits well with Hume's point in the involuntariness passages: when we do not reflect on the issue, the belief in the existence of Real entities returns.

(3) This *no-single-Hume interpretation* can also deal with the sceptical arguments against the senses that Hume advances. The result of the first profound argument against the senses is that the belief in Realism is epistemically unjustified and this result supports my claim about Hume's philosophical view. By contrast to the Realist readings, the second profound argument does not create any problem for it either. Hume's attitude in the domain of philosophy is to suspend his judgement on the existence of Real entities mainly because Real entities are beyond the reach of our understanding (second argument). The most significant advantage of my account in comparison with the Realist readings is nonetheless that it does not assign the conclusion of the second profound argument, the self-conscious contradiction, to Hume; the contradictory attitudes of suspension and assent are entertained in different domains.<sup>35</sup> Yet my interpretation does not commit Hume to a Pyrrhonist universal suspension of belief because thus interpreted, suspension is restricted: it concerns only one belief and is domain-indexed. Hume the philosopher can easily deny then that universal suspension of belief as the mental effect of the arguments is lasting as he does (EHU 12.2, 15.n.32, 21, 23

and 25).

(4) My *no-single-Hume interpretation* steers away from the problems involved in Popkin's and Fogelin's *no-single-Hume accounts*. It is neither trivial nor draws too a simplistic picture of belief-formation in Hume's view, on the one hand, and makes it possible that Hume has a final philosophical position, on the other. It allows Hume to have serious theoretical ambitions – which he has – because suspension of judgement concerns only one philosophical topic. It is preferable to Baxter's account for three reasons. (1) It does not render Hume a Pyrrhonist who suspends all rational assent. (2) It is founded upon a Humean distinction and (3) is coherent with Hume's view that philosophical arguments interact with and are of the same type as common life reasonings.

##### 5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have defended the interpretation that Hume is both a sceptic and a positive dogmatist on the existence of Real entities. To put it in contemporary terms, he is both a non-Realist and a Realist. Scepticism or non-Realism is his position in the philosophical domain, whereas his everyday view is (philosophically speaking) positive dogmatism: a firm belief that there are Real entities.

In early modern philosophy, corporeal substance, individual bodies and their causal powers are paradigm cases of Real entities. From this *no-single-Hume interpretation* it follows that Hume's position in the domain of philosophy does not involve any standpoint concerning their existence. Hume's philosophy of body, if he has any, must be non-Realist:

on his view, matter and bodies are not perception-independent. Hume's philosophical position can therefore be neither materialism nor mind-body dualism.

Also, if my interpretation is correct, it is not possible that Hume's philosophical ontological commitments involve anything Real that would ground causation as regularity between events. It is not consistent to avoid commitment to the existence of a category of possible entities in any sense of commitment and to commit oneself to the existence of a sub-category of these entities at the same time. This casts a shadow over the much debated New Humean interpretation of Hume's view on causation. Indeed, if my interpretation is correct, its Causally Realist (perhaps not agnostic or sceptical<sup>36</sup>) forms are refuted.<sup>37</sup>

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1 Following Michael J. Loux (2002, 250), in order to distinguish Metaphysical Realism and Metaphysically Real entities from the other uses of 'realism' and 'real' (and its cognates), I write the former with the capital 'r'. For the sake of brevity, I will henceforth drop 'Metaphysical.'

2 All references to the *first Enquiry* are to Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, edited by T. L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000). All references to the *Treatise* are to Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by D. F. Norton and M. J. Norton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007). Both will be cited by a series of Arabic numerals: four in the case of the *Treatise* (book, chapter, section, paragraph) and two in the case of the *Enquiry* (section and paragraph).

3 The Humean understanding of Realism requires three remarks of clarification.

In the first place, I would like to emphasise that it is precisely this definition that begins Hume's discussion of external existence both in the first *Enquiry* and the *Treatise*. As this definition of Realism is highly abstracted, there can be several specific descriptions of Real entities. In principle, it is also possible that there are more than one kind of these entities (e.g. matter, God). This paper discusses Hume's attitude to the existence of Real entities *on this level of abstraction*. Thus, I do not have to discuss his following two distinctions: (1) distinguishing Real entities as '*specifically* different from our perceptions' from Real entities as not specifically different from perceptions (T 1.2.6.9, 1.4.2.2 and 1.4.5.19-20), and (2) the distinction between the 'vulgar' and different philosophical accounts of Real entities in EHU 12.9-14 and T 1.4.2 (Representative Realism) and EHU 12.15 and T 1.4.4 (Real entities having only primary qualities). As Hume's discussion in both the works clearly indicates, all these may be thought to fall (right or wrong) into the category of Real entities. Besides, the talk about objects '*specifically* different from our perceptions' vanishes from the first *Enquiry*.

In the second place, Hume must make the distinction between ontological and causal perception-independence/dependence: between existence depending on perceptions and perceiving affecting properties. Otherwise we cannot make sense of a curious aspect of Hume's discussion in T 1.4.2: it is consistent to think that perceptions are independent existences but it is a gross mistake to take them as such (T 1.4.2.39 and 44-5). If we make the distinction between ontological and causal independence/dependence, this apparent contradiction is avoided: perceptions are ontologically independent but causally dependent entities. It is Hume's reason for denying that perceptions are Real that they are causally dependent on perceiving, i.e. the process of perception affects their content (T 1.4.2.44-5). From this we

can conclude regarding Real entities that according to Hume they must be both ontologically and causally perception-independent, i.e. perceiving does not affect their properties. This is confirmed by the fact that in the *Treatise*, Hume explicitly distinguishes ontological independence from operational, i.e. causal independence: 'Under this last head I comprehend their situation as well as relations, their external position as well as the *independence* of their existence and operation. (T 1.4.2.2)'

In the third place, the Humean definition of Realism involves externality in absolute as opposite to perception-dependent space. Hume suggests this by the following formulation in the first *Enquiry*: 'an external universe, which depends not on our perception. (EHU 12.7)'

4 So I will speak not only about Real entities but sometimes also of 'Real matter, bodies, causes and powers' meaning material substance, individual bodies composed of it, and individual bodies as causes and powers.

5 The connection between Hume's attitude to Realism and the New Humean interpretation of Hume's view of causation is a complicated matter. Here there is no room for pursuing this question, but I will say something about it in the conclusion. For the summary of the New Hume debate, see Read and Richman 2007, Kail 2008, and Millican 2009.

6 My claim is restricted to Hume's view of Realism. I am not stating that the relation is same in the other parts of Hume's philosophy such as his attitude to induction.

7 I would like to emphasise that none of the *no-single-Hume interpretations* is intended to imply that Hume was a split personality, that there were two really distinct persons/subjects in him. There was only one historical David Hume (at least there is no evidence for him being schizophrenic). But this Hume had different views in philosophy and common life.

8 The summary elaborates upon the reconstruction of the second profound argument against the senses that I defend in my dissertation, which is a published book. I analyse it in meticulous detail and present a structural diagram of it (Hakkarainen 2007, chap. 3.4).

9 A fine summary of this interpretation can be found in Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), edited by Derek R. Brookes and Knud Haakonsen (Edinburgh, 2002), p. 162. For other references, see Kemp Smith 2005, 3-8 and chap. IV, and Norton 1982, 3-5, 192, and 196-204. It was also endorsed by H.H. Price (1940, 227) in his otherwise more positive phenomenalist reading of Hume in the 1940s. Recently, Louis Loeb is amongst the few who has defended it as a side topic of his book (2002, viii and 215-6).

10 The exact description of the New Humean interpretation is not an easy task. This is exemplified by Peter Kail's characterisation as he includes the mere sceptical view in it. Yet he calls the mere sceptical view 'realist' because according to him it is committed to the comprehensibility and metaphysical possibility of causation as more than mere regularity ('thick' connection, for example). This is understandable in the discussion over Hume's theory of causation because the context of the New Humeans is to oppose the anti-realist Old Humean account, according to which Hume denies causation as anything more than mere observed regularity. (Kail 2008, 442-3 and 450-1) However, we should keep the interpretations of Hume's view on causation and Causal Realism separate from interpreting his attitude to Realism in general because they are different although related issues. This has three significant consequences. (1) The different views about Hume on Realism should be primarily classified by what they say about Hume's doxastic attitude to the *existence* of Real entities (although this is connected to conceptual and semantic issues and related to Hume's view on causation). (2) In this categorisation, John P. Wright's, Strawson's and Kail's New Humean interpretations are Realist as they claim that Hume is committed – however weakly – to the existence of Real entities. This is manifested by their eagerness to argue against Hume's endorsement of the second profound argument as will be shown below. (3) The mere sceptical position on Realism should be called *non-Realist* because it does not involve *any* positive doxastic attitude to the existence of Real entities. Calling it 'Realist' because it acknowledges the comprehensibility of what is suspended is not satisfactory. As this article shows, it is not necessary for suspending judgement on the existence of entity *x* that *x* can be understood. When its incomprehensibility (in the sense of vacuousness) is realised, a completely reasonable option is to suspend judgement, to be silent about its existence.

11 In Livingston's view, Hume takes the everyday belief in Real entities as a transcendental presupposition of our experience and reasoning (1984, 3 and 15). For Baier, Hume's 'true philosophy' is the critical application and self-reflection of common life beliefs and reasonings including the belief in Real entities (1991, 20-7). Morris claims that Hume advocates a return to common life from the philosophical 'problem space' of 'modern philosophy.' Modern philosophy produces the hardest sceptical argument against the belief in Real entities, T 1.4.4, which corresponds to what I am calling the second profound argument. (Morris 2000, 108-9)

12 All references to the *Abstract* are to Hume, *An Abstract of a Book lately published, entitled. A Treatise of Human Nature, &c. wherein the chief argument of that book is farther illustrated and explained* (1740), *A Treatise of Human*

*Nature*, edited by D. F. Norton and M. J. Norton (Oxford, 2007), pp. 403-417. Hume's *Abstract* is cited by *Abs.* and an Arabic numeral referring to paragraph.

13 The New Humean position may be formulated in the way that the doxastic propositional attitude to the existence of Real entities is weaker than belief. It may be supposing, taking for granted or assuming. (Kail 2008, 446) Anyhow, all of these *are* commitments to the existence of Real entities – even if the degree of the commitment varies. The point of my argument concerns ontological commitment. Thus, my argument against attributing the belief in Real entities can work against them, too. For the sake of brevity, I will speak only about belief.

14 Note that this premise concerns the *comprehensible* properties of Real entities (matter and bodies). In their set, perceptible primary qualities are the only candidates for the Real properties of matter. But matter may have *incomprehensible* properties in addition to primary qualities and proper sensibles. So the PSP *alone* does not imply the principle that matter has only primary qualities. The PSP is independent from the latter principle.

15 One of the virtues of this schematic reconstruction is thus that different positions and disagreements in the literature can be singled out nicely by its means.

16 I cannot argue this point fully here; for the present purposes, this will do. I have made a full case elsewhere (Hakkarainen 2007, 245-52). It might be also the case that Hume's two definitions of cause (EHU 7.29 and T 1.3.14.31) require that both *relata* of causation are perceptible. In Strawson's relative idea, the cause is not (in his own view). So it would not be permitted to employ causal concepts in describing it.

17 Garrett made me this comment in conversation.

18 These points originate in Winkler 2007 and Flage 2007.

19 In the paper, there is no room to discuss the possible textual evidence for this in EHU 12.9, 16, T 1.2.6.8-9 and 1.4.5.19-20. I have argued elsewhere that these passage do not constitute sufficient evidence for ascribing the doctrine of the relative idea of Real matter to Hume (Hakkarainen 2007, 232-44).

20 EHU 1.14.n.1 (in 1748-50 editions), T 3.1.1.26, T 1.4.4.3-4, T 1.4.4.15, T 1.4.7.4, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (Hereafter: E), *Of the Standard of Taste* (Hereafter: ST), 234, 229-30, and E, *The Sceptic* (Hereafter: S), 166, n.3. All references to E are to Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (1741 – 1777), edited by E. F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987). Hume's *Essays* are cited by the abbreviation of the title of the essay and an Arabic number referring to

page number. I have made a full case for this in Hakkarainen 2010.

21 Kail has suggested that what Garrett calls Hume's 'Title Principle' (1997, 234) provides Hume means for avoiding commitment to the second profound argument. Kail's tempting solution is that this argument is undermined by the Title Principle because in it reasoning does not mix with 'a natural propensity', which the Title Principle requires of authoritative reasonings (2007, 70). However, Kail's solution does not work for two reasons. First, there is no *specific* textual evidence for it. The Title Principle occurs only once in Hume's works (T 1.4.7.11). The context of this occurrence is Hume's answer to the Pyrrhonian moment (Ibid.8) created by scepticism with regard to reason (Ibid.7 and T 1.4.1). Hume does not bring it forward as a reply to T 1.4.4 and its recapitulation at 1.4.7.4-5. So Kail's solution suffers from insufficient textual evidence. Secondly, I have shown that Hume endorses all the premises of the second profound argument. Thus, it is not coherent for him to reject, because of the Title Principle, their conjunction, that is, the second profound argument (one cannot accept *p* and *q* but not their conjunction).

22 EHU 2.4, 3.16.n.6, 4.21, 5.10, 8.8, 8.36, 12.20, 12.n.34, T 1.1.5.8, 1.4.4.1, 1.4.5.1-2, 14, 1.4.6.2, 1.4.7.4-8, 3.App.10 and 21

23 It is true that Hume says in this passage that the contradiction is generated by *successive* assent to the consistent use of reason and the belief in Realism. My reading of the passage is that he cannot mean that the contradiction holds diachronically. His point is rather that successive assent to the proper exercise of reason and the belief in Realism produces the contradiction between simultaneous suspension of this belief and holding it.

24 It is a different issue how this is possible if Hume is a fully-fledged determinist.

25 After this article was submitted and revised, Fogelin published a new book *Hume's Skeptical Crisis – A Textual Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

26 For a detailed account, see Fogelin 1985, 80ff.

27 In order to avoid this problem, I think, in his book Baxter develops this interpretation in a direction that comes close to the naturalist interpretations and makes his reading vulnerable to the inconsistency problem. Now the Humean conception of reason, including induction, belongs to the passive assent as well as the belief in Realism (Baxter 2008, 9-14). What is more, both exemplify 'stable' passive assents, which Hume prefers to varying assents of the same kind (Ibid. 9). The active assent is the sphere of 'rationalist reason', 'an idealized kind of belief assumed by his opponents and by most of us.

(Ibid. 101 and 9)' Baxter cannot thus distinguish the second profound argument from the belief in Realism as belonging to distinct kinds of assents. His interpretation is not therefore able to avoid the inconsistency problem between the two anymore. This is the reason why I focus on his earlier view.

28 EHU 4.21, 5.2, 12.5, 21, 23, 24, 25, T 1.4.2, intro.1-3, E, *Of Essay-Writing* (Hereafter: EW), 533-4, and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Hereafter: DNR) 1.9. All references to DNR are to Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779), edited by D. Coleman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Hume's *Dialogues* is cited by DNR and two Arabic numerals referring to Part and paragraph.

29 Hume thinks that embracing some contradictions is not so serious in everyday life (T 1.4.7.7, EHU 4.21 and DNR 1.10).

30 I would like to emphasise that Realism is the philosophical analysis of the everyday belief. I am not ascribing to Hume the claim that everyday people are aware that they endorse the philosophical tenet of Realism or that it is identical in details with philosophical Realisms. This is completely coherent with how Hume himself discusses the issue (EHU 12.7-9, 14, 16 and T 1.4.2).

31 The question how this distinction is supposed to work generally in Hume's thinking cannot be pursued here. I believe though that it is a fruitful perspective to many topics such as induction and personal identity.

32 In itself, my account does not rule it out that the belief in Realism and suspending this belief may be simultaneous. Whether it implies that these attitudes cannot be simultaneous is a further issue that cannot be discussed here. This implication seems to require the additional premise that denies the psychological possibility of entertaining these contradictory attitudes in different domains at the same time. However, discussing this premise would require another article. It clearly depends on what belief and suspension are and what Hume's theory of belief says about them.

33 It may be so, for instance, that the philosophical domain is preferable from the domain of common life as well for two reasons. (1) The distinction between their epistemic standards is a difference in degree. (2) The rational capacities that these domains share are merely followed more rigorously and consistently in the philosophical discourse.

34 For an introduction to this discussion, see Rysiew P., 'Epistemic Contextualism', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2003 Edition), edited by E. N. Zalta (URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/contextualism-epistemology/#GenForConSol>>).

35 Hume's Academical philosophy consists of two attitudes. The first of them is doubt, suspension, caution and modesty (EHU 5.1 and 12.24). The second attitude is 'confining to very narrow bounds the enquiries of the understanding' or 'the limitation of our enquiries to such subjects as are best adapted to the narrow capacity of human understanding. (EHU 5.1 and 12.25)' These limits are set by a kind of empiricist epistemological realism. According to Hume, experience is the standard of knowledge and justified belief: 'experience [...] is the foundation of moral reasoning, which forms the greater part of human knowledge. (EHU 12.29; see also 5.1 and DNR 1.10)'

That the sceptical and Realist reading of Hume is compatible with the second element of Hume's Academical philosophy would call for an extended argument. There is no room here for that discussion. Yet it may be noted that some kind of phenomenalist epistemological realism, for instance, seems to be coherent with suspension of judgement on the existence of Real entities. Besides, this suspension does not rule out agreement on what we experience. It is that agreement perhaps that can work as the empirical basis for judging beliefs.

36 For what I take to be a devastating argument against any form of the New Humean interpretation of Hume's theory of causation, see Millican 2009, §§6-8.

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