

HUME ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

QUALITIES

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Introduction

George Berkeley is well-known for his immaterialist philosophy and metaphysics; the good Bishop is one of the main critics of the 'new' Corpuscularian and Cartesian philosophy of body of the 17th century. Hume's attack on substance is standard material in introductions to the history of philosophy as well as his scepticism concerning the external world, or as he himself calls it, scepticism against or with regard to the senses. It is also common knowledge that Hume uses one of Berkeley's many sceptical arguments against matter in his writings. This is the argument at the end of Part 1, Section 12 of *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (1748)¹ (EHU 12.15-6) and the main argument of the Section *Of the modern philosophy* in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739)² (T 1.4.4.5-16). It is therefore surprising that this Berkeleyan sceptical argument is too much ignored in the literature (Hakkarainen 2007: xvii-xviii). The argument is apparently premised on the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Accordingly, Hume's understanding and view of this distinction has not received enough attention in the literature either. In general, his attitude to the 'new' philosophy and metaphysics of body is not widely studied.

¹ Hereafter: EHU/first *Enquiry*. Hume (2000) will be cited by a series of Arabic numerals: two in the case of the first *Enquiry* (section and paragraph).

² Hereafter: T/*Treatise*. Hume (2007) will be cited by a series of Arabic numerals: four in the case of the *Treatise* (book, chapter, section, paragraph).

This article is part of my larger project to study Hume's metaphysics of body and his attitude to Metaphysical Realism³, which is part of one of the hottest debates of Hume scholarship in the last decades, “the New Hume Debate” on whether he is a Causal Realist or not (Richman and Read 2007). One of the key issues in my project is Hume's attitude to the Berkeleyan sceptical argument that is apparently premised on the primary/secondary qualities distinction. If that argument really is Hume's own argument, he cannot be a Metaphysical Realist and his philosophy and metaphysics of body must be non-Realist and non-materialist. In that case, Hume would thus join the ranks of the critics of 'new' material substance, such as Berkeley - with a more moderate or less dogmatical attitude though. According to the conclusion of this argument of Hume, the notion of material substance is vacuous: empty of content (but the notion is not inconsistent as Berkeley argues). In this sense, Hume would thus think that material substance is incomprehensible to the human understanding.

How we should interpret Hume's metaphysics of body hangs therefore on his view of this sceptical argument. Indeed, we should talk about arguments here as its versions in the first *Enquiry* (EHU 12.15-6) and the *Treatise* (T 1.4.4.6-15) differ slightly.

³ Metaphysical Realism is the doctrine that there are perception-independent, absolutely external, and continued entities. Following Michael J. Loux, 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’ (Loux 2002: 250). For the sake of brevity, I will henceforth drop “Metaphysical.” My published doctoral dissertation studies Hume's attitude to Realism (Hakkarainen 2007).

Following Hume, I will call the first *Enquiry* version of this reasoning “the second profound argument against the senses” and the form that it takes in the *Treatise*, “T 1.4.4.6-15”.

At bottom, Hume's endorsement of these arguments depends on his view of the primary/secondary qualities distinction because they are premised on this distinction, or more precisely, on what Hume thinks is fundamental in the distinction. As every other major premise clearly represents his view, if Hume holds the fundamental principle of this distinction, there are not many possibilities to deny his commitment to the conclusion of the arguments. Thus, in that case his metaphysics of body would be non-materialist and his philosophy non-Realist in general.

Accordingly, some Hume scholars who embrace a Realist interpretation have questioned Hume's endorsement of the primary/secondary qualities distinction. One of Don Garrett's interpretative strategies in his Realist and naturalist Hume interpretation⁴ is to challenge Hume's assent to the distinction between primary and secondary qualities (Garrett 1997: 218-20). Annette Baier, Donald W. Livingston, and William Edward Morris have denied Hume's endorsement of the entire second profound argument and T 1.4.4.6-15 including his endorsement of the primary/secondary qualities distinction (Baier 1991: 21 and 107, Livingston 1984: 24 and 9ff., and Morris 2000: 96-102 and 106)⁵.

⁴ Garrett 1997: 208 and 234, 2004: 83 and 90, 2006: 167 and 171

The second part of this essay consists in discussing Hume's attitude to what he thinks is the fundamental principle of the primary/secondary qualities distinction. However, before that we must consider Hume's understanding of this distinction. In the first part of the article, I therefore detect an insight that Hume has into the primary/secondary qualities distinction. In order to see that, we must make the distinction between *secondary qualities* and *proper sensibles*. Secondary qualities are powers in Real bodies, while proper sensibles are properties that are the immediate objects of each of our five senses. My first thesis is that Hume has an insight into the heart of most of "new philosophy" when he claims that according to it, proper sensibles are not Real properties of material substance and Real bodies.⁶ Accordingly, this is my focus on the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. I will call it "the Proper Sensibles Principle" (PSP).

In the second part of the paper, I defend the interpretation - mainly against Garrett's doubts - that the Proper Sensibles Principle is a rational tenet in Hume's view and he thus endorses it. Its rationality means that the PSP has a firm foundation in inductive-causal reasoning. My argument has both a positive and a negative part. First I discuss passages from Hume's writings that support his endorsement of the PSP and its rationality. In the negative part, I reply to four challenges to Hume's assent to the PSP,

⁵ Somewhat surprisingly, the New Humeans John P. Wright and Galen Strawson believe that Hume adheres to the distinction although they deny his endorsement of the conclusion of the second profound argument (Wright 1995/86: 232 and 1983: 109-11, Strawson 2002: 237-41).

⁶ Here I side with Peter Kail's excellent discussion of the topic (2007: Ch. 7.2.1).

three of which are Garrett's. Part of this section consists in discussing Hume's argument for the PSP at T 1.4.4.3-4, which leads to perceive a gap in it observed by Louis Loeb.

Hume's Insight of the Primary/Secondary Qualities Distinction

Hume seems to be guilty of a serious misunderstanding when he speaks about "secondary" and "sensible qualities" interchangeably in EHU 12.15-6. This apparent misunderstanding is especially manifest in the beginning of the second profound argument against the senses in which Hume writes as follows:

"It is universally allowed by modern enquirers, that all the sensible qualities of objects, such as hard, soft, hot, cold, white, black, &c. are merely secondary, and exist not in the objects themselves, but are perceptions of the mind, without any external archetype or model, which they represent." (EHU 12.15)

In this passage, Hume seems to suggest that according to every 'new philosopher' – in opposition to medieval or ancient predecessors -, secondary qualities are nothing in Real objects. It is plain that Hume's thesis is incorrect in the trivial sense that there were immaterialist 'new philosophers' before him and in this time who did not commit themselves to any claims about the properties of matterial substance and Real bodies – Berkeley, for example. Let us focus, however, on materialist or substance-dualist 'new philosophers'. Hume's contention appears to be mistaken because not every

materialist or dualist 'new philosopher' denied the existence of secondary qualities in material substance and Real bodies. We must only consider Locke who does not deny the Reality of secondary qualities. Instead, he affirms that they are something in Real bodies, *i.e.*, powers:

“2dly, Such *Qualities*, which in truth are nothing in the Objects themselves, but Powers to produce various Sensations in us by their *primary Qualities*, *i.e.* by the Bulk, Figure, Texture, and Motion of their insensible parts, as Colours, Sounds, Tasts, *etc.* These I call *secondary Qualities*.” (Essay 2.8.10).⁷

“What I have said concerning *Colours* and *Smells* may be understood also of *Tastes* and *Sounds*, and other the like sensible qualities; which, whatever reality we by mistake attribute to them, are in truth nothing in the objects themselves, but powers to produce various sensations in us” (Ibid. 14)

“They [secondary qualities] are, in the Bodies we denominate from them, only a Power to produce those Sensations in us: and what is Sweet, Blue, or Warm in *Idea*, is but the certain Bulk, Figure, and Motion of the insensible Parts, in the Bodies themselves, which we call so.” (Ibid. 15)

Is Hume then on the wrong track right from the start in the first *Enquiry* when he argues against the comprehensibility of material substance and Real bodies? Is he

⁷ Locke (1975) is hereafter referred to as *Essay*. It will be cited by a series of Arabic numerals: book, chapter and section.

really such a careless reader of Locke that he misses these passages? Or is he merely misrepresenting Locke on purpose?

I think this is a hasty conclusion because it misses Hume's point. In order to see that, let us consider the corresponding Section of the *Treatise, Of the modern philosophy* (1.4.4).

When we read this Section carefully, we come to realise that Hume uses the term "secondary quality" only twice and never claims that they are nothing in material substance and Real bodies (T 1.4.4.9 and 11).⁸ Instead, his focus is on what Aristotle called "proper sensibles" (*idia aisthêta*) (*De Anim.* 2.6)⁹: "colours, sounds, tastes, smells, heat and cold" (T 1.4.4.3).

One of the premises of this Section is then that it is proper sensibles that are nothing in material substance and Real bodies. Here are notable examples:

"The fundamental principle of that philosophy is the opinion concerning colours, sounds, tastes, smells, heat and cold; which it asserts to be nothing but impressions in the mind, deriv'd from the operation of external objects, and without any resemblance to the qualities of the objects." (T 1.4.4.3)

⁸ "colours, sounds, and other secondary qualities", "the secondary and sensible qualities"

⁹ Aristotle (1956) is cited by *De Anim.* Bekker numbers.

“[U]pon the removal of sounds, colours, heat, cold, and other sensible qualities, from the rank of continu’d independent existences, we are reduc’d merely to what are called primary qualities, as the only real ones, of which we have any adequate notion.” (Ibid.5)

“If colours, sounds, tastes, and smells be merely perceptions, nothing we can conceive is possest of a real, continu’d, and independent existence” (Ibid.6).

“When we reason from cause and effect, we conclude, that neither colour, sound, taste, nor smell have a continu’d and independent existence. When we exclude these sensible qualities there remains nothing in the universe, which has such an existence.” (Ibid.15)

As these quotations show, the point of the primary/secondary qualities distinction - what Hume calls “the fundamental principle” of the modern philosophy – is, at least in the view of the *Treatise* - the Proper Sensibles Principle (PSP). This principle states that proper sensibles are not Real properties of material substance and Real bodies. It is also to be observed that in the second and fourth quotation Hume speaks about “sensible qualities” instead of “secondary qualities”.¹⁰ This clue is important for two reasons. First, it suggests that for understanding Hume’s insight we must make the distinction between proper sensibles and secondary qualities. In this context, Hume's use of “sensible qualities” is to refer to proper sensibles.¹¹ Secondly, it helps to realise that Hume’s point is the same in the first *Enquiry* as in the *Treatise*. His focus is rather

¹⁰ The third occurrence of this term in T 1.4.4 is in §11 where Hume seems to treat it as the synonym of “secondary qualities”.

on proper sensibles than on secondary qualities. In order to see that, let us consider the relevant passages in EHU 12.15-16.

In the second sentence of EHU 12.15, which I have already quoted, first Hume speaks about sensible qualities. Then he gives examples that belong exactly to proper, tactile and visual sensibles: “hard, soft, hot, cold, white, black”. Hume claims that these “are merely secondary”, which means that they “exist not in the objects themselves”. In the fourth sentence, Hume also speaks about sensible qualities when he writes that “all the qualities, perceived by the senses, be in the mind, not in the object”. In the light of these two sentences, it is justified to read the term “sensible qualities” in the next paragraph (16) as meaning proper sensibles. The principle about which Hume is talking there is thus the Proper Sensibles Principle:

“if it be a principle of reason that all sensible [proper sensible] qualities are in the mind, not in the object.” (EHU 12.16)

Furthermore, Hume ends the previous paragraph by arguing that the putative abstract ideas of primary qualities are incomprehensible. In this argument, he concentrates on extension and claims that it cannot be conceived of without tactile or visual properties, hardness, temperature, and colours, which are proper sensibles.

¹¹ He uses the term also in the broader sense of meaning any sensible property (e.g. EHU 4.2.16 and 7.1.8).

I take these passages to support the interpretation that Hume's point also in the first *Enquiry* is the PSP. Here I do not want to take any stance on his other views of the primary/secondary qualities distinction – as his view of the status of the putative primary qualities. My thesis is restricted to denying the Reality of proper sensibles although the PSP implies that the perceptions of proper sensibles cannot resemble anything in material substance and Real bodies.

Showing that Hume's insight into the heart of 'new philosophy' is really an insight would naturally require a very extensive argument discussing all the main figures of 'new philosophy'. As there is no room for that here, I can only observe that it is a widely accepted view that almost all materialist or dualist 'new philosophers' believed in the PSP. Actually, it was one of the distinguishing features of 'new philosophy' that material substance and Real bodies were cleared out of the proper sensible properties.¹² In this respect, matter and bodies do not resemble our sense-perceptions. Although Hume abstracts here very much from the diverse 'new' philosophy of body and metaphysics, this seems to be a matter of fact - regardless of another matter of fact that there was no commonly accepted terminology.¹³ Take, for example,

¹² The PSP is also one of the Epicurean sides of "new philosophy". According to David Sedley, Epicurus' view is that atoms are completely void of proper sensible qualities. Even if Epicurus seems to think that macroscopic objects have those qualities, atoms do not have colour, hardness or temperature, sound, taste, and smell. (Sedley 2005: 379-82) They "have only the ineliminable properties of all body: resistance, size, shape and weight." (Ibid. 379) So if the PSP is confined to the ultimate Real bodies in Epicurus' view, this tenet may be attributed to him.

¹³ As Peter Anstey shows in his book on Boyle (2000: Ch. 1).

Descartes and Malebranche. They do not use the terms “primary qualities” and “secondary qualities” but make the distinction between the “essence” and “modifications” of (Real) matter and its “sensible” or “sense qualities” (*Search* 1.10.1; LO, 49, Elucidation 6; LO, 569-70, and 573-4, Cottingham 1993: 149, and Garber 1992: 292-298).¹⁴ Indeed, this very terminological choice does not undermine Hume's insight but actually supports it. In their terms, Descartes and Malebranche sharply distinguish the Real properties of matter from proper sensibles.

However, things are not so simple as the standard view suggests. One of the leading figures of 'new philosophy', Locke takes solidity as both a proper sensible (touch) and a primary quality (*Essay* 2.4.1 and 2.8.9). This is a clear counter-example to Hume's insight casting a shadow on the universality of its extension. Nevertheless, I do not think that it can disprove Hume's claim; his insight seems to be a correct *general* description of the core of the materialist and dualist 'new philosophy'. Besides, he can and does argue against Locke in this respect: for Hume, solidity is not a proper sensible but a complex common sensible (touch and sight) (T 1.4.4.9 and 12-14).

¹⁴ Malebranche (1997) is cited by *Search* Book number.Chapter number.section number; LO, page number.

Hume's View of the Proper Sensibles Principle and Its Rationality

Textual Evidence

The first potential evidence for Hume holding the rationality of the PSP is the point that the first *Enquiry* and the *Treatise* treat it rather as a rational than as an unreflective principle. The PSP is classified as a philosophical tenet instead of an everyday, natural or “vulgar” principle. It is attributed to “modern enquirers” or “modern philosophy”.

It must be admitted, however, that this is only potential evidence. Hume may still think that this principle is not a proper rational tenet. This possibility would be that the argument for it does not really justify it. Hence we need more evidence for the interpretation that Hume endorses the PSP because it is rational.

As I have observed above, Hume claims that the PSP is a principle “universally allowed by modern enquirers” (EHU 12.15). Notwithstanding the historical correctness, this quotation yields evidence for Hume’s endorsement of the principle itself if he includes himself in these “modern enquirers”. He asserts that the PSP is universally believed by them and if he belongs to these “modern enquirers”, this quotation is a statement of his view.

In Hume's times - as in ours -, according to OED, "modern" used to be understood as the opposite to "ancient" (OED: modern, 2.a; E, ST, 245) and for sure, Hume does not think he is one of the ancients. Therefore it seems to be a reasonable assumption that he identifies himself with these "modern enquirers" and assents to the PSP. However, this may not be the whole story. "Modern enquirers" can refer to a subgroup of the modern philosophers and we cannot be sure that Hume thinks he belongs to that group. Consider, for instance, the distinction between Cartesian and Newtonian physics. Both are "modern" but still there are deep differences between them. Thus, this quote cannot settle the problem we are addressing now.

The next natural move is to look at the entire first *Enquiry* whether it can provide evidence of Hume's attitude to the rationality of the PSP or his relationship to the "modern enquirers". Unfortunately, there is no explicit evidence for this apart from a withdrawn footnote (EHU 1.14.n.1; 1748-50 editions). That note concerns morality and is relevant here. However, in addition to being omitted from the final editions, it must be discussed in connection with similar passages from Hume's other texts. Let us therefore consider what the *Treatise*, his essays¹⁵ and other texts can say about Hume's attitude to the PSP and its rationality.

My thesis is that when all the relevant passages in Hume's texts are taken into consideration, the evidence supports more his endorsement of the rationality of the PSP, and the principle itself, than his suspension or denial of it. Despite the fact that

¹⁵ Hereafter: E. Hume (1987) is cited by E, abbreviated title of the essay, page number.

Hume is more explicit of his assent in the *Treatise* than in the later texts. We are therefore justified in claiming that Hume thinks the PSP is a rational tenet and that he thus endorses it.¹⁶ This does not mean necessarily, however, that Hume assent to the PSP is unqualified - or that the evidence is decisive. I will discuss the certainty of his assent below.

To begin with, in 1762 Hume commented Reid's manuscript of *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764). This happened through the hands of their common friend, Hugh Blair (1718-1800).¹⁷ A part of this short letter is relevant for the present purposes:

“The author supposes that the Vulgar do not believe the sensible Qualities of Heat, Smell, Sound, & probably Colour to be really in the Bodies, but only their Causes or something capable of producing them in the Mind. But this is imagining the Vulgar to be Philosophers & Corpuscularians from their Infancy. You know what pains it cost Malebranche & Locke to establish that Principle. There are but obscure Traces of it among the Antients viz in the Epicurean School. The Peripatetics maintaind opposite Principles. And indeed Philosophy scarce ever advances a greater Paradox in the Eyes of the People, than when it affirms that Snow is neither cold nor white: Fire hot nor red.” (Hume to Hugh Blair 4 July 1762) (Hume 1986: 416)

¹⁶ I thereby agree with Wright (Wright 1983: 109-12 and 1995/86: 232).

¹⁷ For the details of this incident, see Hume 1986.

Hume begins this passage by stating the PSP. His point is to criticise Reid for contending that this principle represents our everyday view. His argument is that from the everyday point of view the PSP is a paradox and it was Malebranche and Locke who proved the tenet. So it is rather a rational than a “vulgar” or natural principle and a paradox only from the everyday perspective. This letter suggests then that Hume takes the PSP as a proven, rational tenet. (Hume 1986: 416)

It must be granted, however, that this letter in itself cannot constitute decisive evidence for Hume holding the rationality of the PSP. Further and more substantial support can be found from Hume’s famous essay *Of the Standard of Taste*. It was published in 1757 (*Four Dissertations*) and as such it is an important document of Hume’s mature views. When he establishes one of the key claims of the essay that “there are certain general principles of [aesthetic] approbation or blame” in human nature, Hume writes as follows:

“If, in the sound state of the organ, there be an entire or a considerable uniformity of sentiment among men, we may thence derive an idea of the perfect beauty; in like manner as the appearance of objects in day-light, to the eye of a man in health, is denominated their true and real colour, even while *colour is allowed to be merely a phantasm of the senses.*” (E, ST, 234; emphasis added)

This passage is typical for Hume as it compares aesthetic and moral beauty with proper sensibles, colours at this point. Here he argues that we can determine “the perfect beauty” in the similar way as we can decide the “true and real colour” of things. Regarding beauty, the situation becomes more complex later in the essay. Still Hume does challenge the view that some works of art, like those by Virgil (70-19), are uniformly felt beautiful (Ibid. 242-3). So here Hume is reporting his own view of beauty, which is only qualified later. As he tries to convince his reader by comparing it with colours, it is most likely that he is reporting his own position with regard to the latter as well - this is obviously the effect he wants to generate here. That position involves the proposition that colour is “merely a phantasm of the senses”, which is a special case of the PSP. This passage constitutes therefore evidence for the interpretation that Hume endorses not only the rationality of the PSP but also the principle itself.

It should also be taken into account that the PSP specific to (physical) taste appears in a positive light in the beginning of the essay. When Hume discusses “a species of philosophy, which cuts off all hopes of success in” attempting “to seek a *Standard of Taste*”, he writes that to “seek in the real beauty, or real deformity, is as fruitless an enquiry, as to pretend to ascertain the real sweet or real bitter.” (E, ST, 229-30) In this article, there is no room to establish that this “species of philosophy”, interpreted in a certain way at least, is the starting point of Hume’s argument in the essay (which is

not based on false premises) and it represents his own view. But if we presume that, and that is what we ought to do in my view, this quote also supports the interpretation that the PSP (of taste) is genuinely a Humean principle. This account is only confirmed by what Hume writes later in the essay:

“Though *it be certain that beauty and deformity, more than sweet and bitter, are not qualities in objects*, but belong entirely to the sentiment, internal or external, it must be allowed, that there are certain qualities in objects which are fitted by nature to produce those particular feelings.” (E, ST, 235; emphasis added)

It is possible to trace this comparison of beauty with proper sensibles back to the *Treatise* through Hume’s another essay, *The Sceptic*. It was published about one year later than the third Book of the *Treatise*, in January 1742 (Miller 1987: xii-iii). The following footnote with more theoretical nature than the essay itself was attached by Hume to the passage where he claims that the beauty of Virgil’s *Aeneid* (ca. 30 BC.; unfinished at his death) “lies not in the poem, but in the sentiment or taste of the reader”. The footnote is so relevant for the purposes of this paper that it is justified to quote it in its entirety:

“Were I not afraid of appearing too philosophical, I should remind my reader of that *famous doctrine, supposed to be fully proved in modern times*, “That

tastes and colours, and all other sensible qualities, lie not in the bodies, but merely in the senses.” *The case is the same with beauty and deformity, virtue and vice. This doctrine, however, takes off no more from the reality of the latter qualities, than from that of the former*; nor need it give any umbrage either to critics or moralists. Though colours were allowed to lie only in the eye, would dyers or painters ever be less regarded or esteemed? There is sufficient uniformity in the senses and feelings of mankind, to make all these qualities the objects of art and reasoning, and to have the greatest influence on life and manners. And as it is certain, that *the discovery above-mentioned in natural philosophy*, makes no alteration on action and conduct; why should *a like discovery in moral philosophy* make any alteration?” (E, S, 166, n.3; emphases added)

This passage is closely similar to those in *Of the Standard of Taste*; note for instance that Virgil is there again to illustrate the point. The difference between these passages lies in the exposition because this time Hume is more explicit of his own views. First he claims that the PSP is “supposed to be fully proved in modern times”. This reminds us of his letter to Blair where Hume says that Malebranche and Locke took pains to establish it. Although “supposed” in itself may cause us to doubt whether Hume really thinks that the PSP is “fully proved”, the letter to Blair and the beginning of the quotation read together strongly suggest that Hume takes the PSP to be decisively proven. This interpretation is corroborated by how Hume continues the footnote. He

identifies the PSP with the non-Reality of beauty and deformity: “the case is the same with beauty and deformity”. He also refers to both by the phrase “This doctrine”. As the non-Reality of beauty and deformity is, without doubt, Hume’s own position, in the light of this passage, the PSP must be as well. They are the same and is not possible to hold one without the other. Moreover, at the end of the quotation, Hume writes that the PSP is a “discovery [...] in natural philosophy” in the same manner as the non-Reality of beauty and deformity is in moral philosophy.

This claim of the discovery occurs also in a closely resembling passage in the third Book of the *Treatise* before *The Sceptic*. In that passage as well, Hume compares (moral) beauty and deformity with the PSP:

“Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compar’d to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which, according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind: And *this discovery* in morals, *like that other in physics, is to be regarded as a considerable advancement* of the speculative sciences; tho’, like that too, it has little or no influence on practice.” (T 3.1.1.26; emphases added)

This passage is important because now Hume does not speak about the supposed proof or mere discovery. He writes that the PSP is a discovery that *must* be taken as an important theoretical improvement, especially in physics. So this yields compelling evidence for Hume's endorsement of the rationality of the PSP, and indeed, of the principle itself.

With these passages in hand, it is time to discuss the footnote that was omitted from the later editions of the first *Enquiry*. The relevant part of the footnote is the following:

“But a late Philosopher [Hutcheson] has taught us, by the most convincing Arguments, that Morality is nothing in the abstract Nature of Things, but is entirely relative to the Sentiment or mental Taste of each particular Being; *in the same Manner as the Distinction of sweet and bitter, hot and cold, arise from the particular Feeling of each Sense and Organ.*” (EHU 1.14.n.1; 1748-50 editions; emphasis added)

In this passage, Hume makes the same comparison between beauty and proper sensibles that he does in the writings he kept on publishing. Thus, Hume did not drop the footnote due to a change of mind. The natural explanation is that he cut it off after 1750 because of the publication of the second *Enquiry*, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, in the following year. It follows from this that the footnote is relevant to Hume’s considered view of the PSP. Indeed, it provides firm support for my claim that Hume endorses the rationality of the PSP. At the end of the passage, Hume writes without reservations that the distinctions between sweet and bitter, hot and cold “arise” due to the perceiver. They are therefore “relative to the Sentiment or mental Taste of each particular Being”. Thus, tastes and felt temperatures are not Real

in their ontological status and Hume is stating a restricted PSP here. The nice thing about the passage is that Hume explicitly commits to the restricted PSP; he is not merely describing Hutcheson's views.

In the *Treatise*, the soundest evidence can be found from 1.4.4 and Hume's reference back to it in the *Conclusion* of Book 1 (1.4.7).¹⁸ Hume begins T 1.4.4 by bringing forward the “fundamental principle of that philosophy [modern]”, the PSP, and comments its foundation as follows:

“Upon examination, I find only one of the reasons commonly produc'd for this opinion to be satisfactory, viz. that deriv'd from the variations of those impressions, even while the external object, to all appearance, continues the same.” (T 1.4.4.3)

In the next paragraph, he continues by claiming that

“The conclusion drawn from them [sense variations], is likewise *as satisfactory as can possibly be imagin'd.*” (T 1.4.4.4; emphasis added)

This conclusion is partly based on the principle that

“from like effects we presume like causes.” (Ibid.)

¹⁸ Instead, those passages where Hume states his view that sounds, smells, and tastes are non-spatial do not count as evidence for his subscription to the PSP (e.g. T 1.3.14.25 and 1.4.5.10). In this passages, his intention is argue that these proper sensible qualities do not have any spatial existence (extension or location). Whereas colours and tactile qualities may have, in these passages he makes the distinction between spatial and non-spatial proper sensibles. As we can see, this distinction is not identical with the divide between primary qualities and proper sensibles.

These passages show that in the *Treatise* Hume takes the PSP as an inductive-causally rational principle. First, he claims that there are “satisfactory” reasons for it. In other words, Hume thinks that there is a convincing argument that justifies the principle. Secondly, the conclusion of the argument, *i.e.* the PSP, is not only convincing but convincing of the highest, imaginable and possible degree. In the third place, the argument for the PSP works on the premise that is Hume’s fourth “rule” of causal reasoning or inductive inference in the *Treatise* (T 1.3.15.6). This argument is then a just inductive inference from Hume’s point of view. This is confirmed by the last paragraph of T 1.4.4 and Hume’s reference back to it in 1.4.7:

“When we reason from cause and effect, we conclude, that neither colour, sound, taste, nor smell have a continu'd and independent existence.” (T 1.4.4.15)

“nor is it possible for us to reason justly and regularly from causes and effects, and at the same time believe the continu'd existence of matter.” (T 1.4.7.4)

Besides the above-discussed passages, there is only one in Hume’s texts that is relevant: EHU 12.16. Peter Millican has suggested that this paragraph may be critical of the PSP because Hume might be advancing a *modus tollens* rather than a *modus ponens* there (Millican 2002: 465). In this passage, Hume says that if the PSP is rational, the belief in “external existence”, *i.e.* in the existence of Real entities is contrary to reason. Millican’s proposal is that Hume’s point might be to challenge the

antecedent by the absurdity of the consequent. If this passage is read out of its wider context in Hume's corpus, Millican's proposal may have some claims to be a justified reading of it.

Nonetheless, the overall evidence points in the opposite direction, towards the reading that Hume embraces the antecedent, *i.e.*, the rationality of the PSP. There are good reasons to think that in *Of the Standard of Taste* the PSP appears as a Humean tenet. In *The Sceptic*, Hume explicitly identifies it with his doctrine that beauty is not a Real property, which is repeated in the Hutcheson footnote to EHU 1 in the early editions. *The Sceptic* and the third Book of the *Treatise* treat the PSP also as a significant improvement in natural philosophy. *The Sceptic* and Hume's letter to Blair, read together, take it as a proven principle. In most of these passages, the PSP is not restricted to non-spatial properties of sounds, smells and tastes (T 1.4.5.9-16) but it is extended equally to visual and tactile qualities. The bulk of the quotations are also from the writings Hume kept on publishing. Perhaps the clearest evidence is, however, from T 1.4.4 and 1.4.7 where Hume explicitly says that the PSP is an inductively well-grounded tenet.

It may be objected to this that the strongest expressions of the endorsement of the PSP and its rationality are in the *Treatise* and the later texts are deliberately more cautious. This is correct *prima facie*, but it only reflects the general change in Hume's rhetoric. The *Treatise* is written mostly in the first person singular. In the later works, Hume

uses more rhetorical devices such as the third person singular, the passive, the verbs “to allow” and “to suppose”, conditional and dialogue which create the impression that the writer detaches himself from the text. The point is, however, that he does so many times when he is, without doubt, putting forward his own views.¹⁹ The impression of caution in the passages under discussion from the later texts cannot therefore undermine their evidential value. Especially in the case of such a difficult and important interpretative question as Hume's attitude to the PSP, we ought not to be lead too much by the first appearance but must read the passages carefully and compare them with each other.

To sum up, the textual evidence we have of Hume's attitude to the PSP and its rationality support more the reading that Hume takes the PSP as a rational tenet than that he does not. Although this evidence is not decisive especially in the point of the certainty of Hume's belief in the PSP, I think it is sufficient for the interpretation that Hume embraces the Proper Sensibles Principle. Its rationality commands his assent.

Challenges and Answers

Notwithstanding the fact that this interpretation has a firm textual basis, four questions can be raised concerning its correctness. The first challenge comes from the direction of non-Realist reading of Hume, the wider argument of which this paper forms a part.

¹⁹ Besides, even in the *Treatise* Hume sometimes uses the same rhetorical devices when he is reporting his own views (T 1.1.1.10, 1.2.1.2, 1.2.2.4, 1.2.5.8, 1.2.6.7, 1.3.9.11, 1.3.12.1 and 13.14.10.).

If Hume does not believe in the existence of material substances and Real bodies (non-Realism), how is it possible for him to endorse the PSP that makes a statement about them? This is analogous to Bricke's, Wright's and Donald L.M. Baxter's contention that Hume's corresponding argument for the mind-dependency of perceptions in EHU 12.9 and T 1.4.2.50 presupposes Metaphysical Realism²⁰ (Bricke 1980: 20, Wright 1983: 86 and Baxter 2008: 14).

This question may be answered by observing that it is completely coherent to formulate the PSP conditionally. This formulation would be that if there are Real material substance and Real bodies, they do not have proper sensibles as their Real properties at all; the proponent of this principle does not have to believe that there are material substance and Real bodies. Therefore there is no obstacle for a non-Realist to maintain the principle conditionally.²¹

The second critical point is made by Garrett (Garrett 1997: 218) – actually it is an objection to Hume's assent to the PSP. He quotes Hume from T 1.4.4.6 where Hume says that “many objections might be made to this system.” Garrett thinks that Hume is here also referring to the PSP as part of the modern “system” of natural philosophy.

²⁰ There are mind-independent, continuous and external entities.

²¹ The same reply applies to Bricke's, Wright's and Baxter's contention that Hume's argument for the mind-dependency of perceptions presupposes Metaphysical Realism.

The PSP would also be a target of T 1.4.4.6-15 and a deep shadow is cast on his endorsement of it, not to speak of its rationality.²²

My reply to Garrett is to reflect on the structure of T 1.4.4 and the logic of Hume's arguments there. After relating this Section to the previous (*Of the antient philosophy*) in the two first paragraphs, the discussion of modern philosophy begins with the PSP and the argument for it in §§3-4. As we have seen, in these paragraphs, Hume's characterizations of the PSP and the argument for it are straightforwardly and strongly positive. The fifth paragraph starts with the statement that “all the other doctrines of that [modern] philosophy seem to follow by an easy consequence” from the PSP. I think that much weight should be put on the qualification “seem” here. It is at this point where Hume's tone becomes more reserved and later sharply critical of modern philosophy. It also shows that Hume takes the PSP independent from “the other doctrines of” the modern philosophy.²³ These “other doctrines” are a tenet that may be called “the Primary Quality Principle” (PQP) and principles of explanation, which are not so relevant for my present argument. The Primary Quality Principle states that the only comprehensible properties that material substance and Real bodies have are primary qualities:

²² Kail makes the same point (2007: 70).

²³ I realised the importance of this point because of Kail's comments.

“[W]e are reduc'd merely to what are call'd primary qualities, as the only *real* ones, of which we have any adequate notion.” (T 1.4.4.5)²⁴

Hume's argument against modern philosophy covers the rest of the Section. He begins it boldly:

“I believe many objections might be made to this system: But at present I shall confine myself to one, which is in my opinion very decisive.” (T 1.4.4.6)

Garrett's worry stems from this passage because Hume appears to say that he argues against the PSP as well when his target is the system of modern philosophy. However, if we consider what the actual target of Hume's arguments is, we come to realise that it is not at least directly the PSP but the PQP. The conclusion of Hume's arguments is the negation of the PQP. He argues to the result that the notion of material substance and Real bodies as having only primary qualities is incomprehensible. The PQP is thus false since it states that they are the only comprehensible properties. Moreover, the arguments against the PQP are clearly based on the PSP. Hume appears to argue merely against the PQP (and thus the explanatory principles since according to them, primary qualities do the explanatory work). The PSP is left untouched and Hume has no problem to endorse it just like the beginning of the Section strongly suggests.

²⁴ That the PQP concerns comprehensible properties explains how Hume may think that the PSP is independent from the PQP. The PQP does not follow from the PSP because they may be incomprehensible properties in addition to proper sensible properties and primary qualities.

It is possible, however, that things are not so simple. T 1.4.4.6-15 may form a *modus tollens* against the entire system of modern philosophy including the PSP. The supposed *modus tollens* argument would be that this system has a false or absurd consequence. First I should say that I do not believe that Hume takes T 1.4.4.6-15 as a *modus tollens*. My reason for this is that T 1.4.4.6-15 is not only premised on the PSP but also on the principles he undoubtedly endorses. For instance, he uses his metaphysics of space established in Part 2, Book 1. However, in order to disprove the *modus tollens* reading, let us suppose for the sake of the argument that T 1.4.4.6-15 indeed forms a *modus tollens*.

Hume evidently thinks that if there is a fundamental principle in the system of modern philosophy, it is the PSP. All other principles “seem” to follow from it. This undermines the readings that T 1.4.4.6-15 forms a *modus tollens* against the system of modern philosophy as the *conjunction* of the PSP and the PQP, which would prove that the PSP is false. Even if Hume thinks that $PSP \rightarrow PQP$ is false (that it merely seems to follow), he clearly does not think that the system is their conjunction. Thus, T 1.4.4.6-15 cannot be a *modus tollens* against the PSP in this sense. The other exhaustive possibility²⁵ is that the system has the form $PSP \rightarrow PQP$.²⁶ T 1.4.4.6-15 would be then a *modus tollens* against this implication. On this assumption, the PSP

²⁵ Equivalence is ruled out by Hume's contention that the PSP is more fundamental than the PQP.

²⁶ Recall that above I have argued against Millican that the overall textual evidence shows that T 1.4.4 and EHU 12.15-6 are not *modus tollens* arguments against the PSP alone.

must be true because PSP → PQP is false (it is disproved by a *reduction ad absurdum*), which fits well with Hume's qualification “seem to follow”.

All things considered, it is not a reasonable reading of T 1.4.4.6-15 that Hume's “decisive objection” is aimed at the PSP. Accordingly, Garrett's challenge cannot undermine the interpretation that Hume embraces the PSP and its rationality.

Garrett's another challenge is his claim that Hume “pointedly refrains from endorsing” the PSP (Garrett 1997: 220). His basis for this assertion is that

“Hume himself [...] does not ever assert the *truth* of the modern philosophers' conclusion about the unreality of secondary qualities. Instead, he restricts himself reporting it as *their* conclusion” (Ibid. 218).

It is correct that Hume never explicitly writes in the first person, “I, David Hume, maintain the PSP”, or in any corresponding manner. Still I think Garrett's conclusion ought not to be drawn from this fact. I have shown above that there is sufficient textual evidence for Hume assenting to the PSP and its rationality in his writings from different periods, most of which he also kept on publishing. Garrett's weak point is also that he does not take account of the other texts than the first Book of the *Treatise*. He does not advance an argument for denying the evidential value of the passages in *Treatise* 3, *The Sceptic*, the 1748-50 editions of the first *Enquiry*, and *Of the Standard of Taste*. However, the most remarkable omission in his discussion

is that he does not quote or discuss the passage in T 1.4.4 where Hume indeed “asserts the *truth* of the modern philosophers’ conclusion about the unreality of secondary qualities.” Hume explicitly claims that the PSP is satisfactory *of the highest possible degree* because it is the conclusion of the argument in T 1.4.4.3-4. Garrett clearly omits and down-plays important evidence against his view in this respect.

The fourth challenge is rather casting doubt on Hume’s endorsement of the PSP than arguing that he refuses to believe it. It is also from Garrett's book and consists in the assessment of the argument for the principle in T 1.4.4.3-4 (Garrett 1997: 218-20).

In replying to the fourth question, I shall first outline the argument in both Hume’s and my own words. After that, it is possible to assess its justness. In the second part, I first locate what I consider to be the real gap in the argument, which is observed by Loeb. From that discussion, I proceed to discuss Garrett’s doubts about the justness of the argument. It leads us to judge his doubts and finally to conclude about the certainty of Hume's endorsement of the PSP.²⁷

The argument outlined using Hume’s own words is the following:

²⁷ Bricke and Wright have also very brief sketches of the argument (Bricke 1980: 18-9, and Wright 1983: 109). But because of their brevity, I mainly concentrate on Loeb and Garrett. Bricke and Wright agree with me that Hume endorses the argument.

(1) “the variations of those impressions, even while the external object, to all appearance, continues the same.” (T 1.4.4.3)

“These variations depend upon several circumstances.” (Ibid.)

“Upon the different situations of our health: A man in a malady feels a disagreeable taste in meats, which before pleas’d him the most.” (Ibid.)

“Upon the different complexions and constitutions of men: That seems bitter to one, which is sweet to another.” (Ibid.)

“Upon the difference of their external situation and position: Colours reflected from the clouds change according to the distance of the clouds, and according to the angle they make with the eye and luminous body.

Fire also communicates the sensation of pleasure at one distance, and that of pain at another.” (Ibid.)

(2) “the same object cannot, at the same time, be endow’d with different qualities of the same sense” (T 1.4.4.4).

(3) “the same quality cannot resemble impressions entirely different” (Ibid.).

(4) “Instances of this kind are very numerous and frequent.” (T 1.4.4.3)

(5) “many of our impressions have no external model or archetype.” (T 1.4.4.4)

“when different impressions of the same sense arise from any object, every one of these impressions has not a resembling quality existent in the object.” (Ibid.)

“Many of the impressions of colour, sound, &c. are confest to be nothing but internal existences, and to arise from causes, which no ways resemble them.” (Ibid.)

(6) “These impressions are in appearance nothing different from the other impressions of colour, sound, &c.” (Ibid.)

(7) “from like effects we presume like causes.” (Ibid.)

(8) “they are, all of them, deriv’d from a like origin.” (Ibid.)

(9) “colours, sounds, tastes, smells, heat and cold [... are] nothing but impressions in the mind, deriv’d from the operation of external objects, and without any resemblance to the qualities of the objects.” (T 1.4.3.3)

The argument has a two-part structure. The first part consists of propositions (1) to (5) and the second of (6) to (9). In the first part, the goal is to argue that there are many impressions of proper sensibles that do not resemble their causes in their supposed Real objects. The second builds on this conclusion with an inductive-causal argument to the result that none of the impressions of proper sensibles resembles their supposed Real objects (PSP).

We can see the relevant points of the argument and Loeb’s and Garrett’s criticism by using an example from Locke (*Essay* 2.8.21). It is closely similar to Hume’s own illustration of fire producing the feeling of pain close at hand and the sensation of pleasure farther off. I just think that Locke’s example is more telling. So, consider the

case where you sink your hands into a bowl of warm water. One of your hands is cold and the other warm before sinking them. With the cold hand, the water feels warm, while in the warm hand the tactile impression is cold(er). In more general terms, here we have a case of two tactile impressions of sensation of one and the same object, or presumably more precisely, of a causal factor in it (the power of the water to produce feelings of temperature in the perceiver).

The first part of the argument (1-5) is arguing that only one of the perceptions of warmth and cold can resemble the causal factor in the water. This happens through inferring first that the water cannot be both warm and cold at the same time (proposition 2). The hidden premise for this conclusion is, as Wright observes, that warm and cold are contrary properties: x cannot be both warm and cold at the same time (although it does not need to be one of them) (Wright 1983: 109). It follows from this, as proposition (3) says, that the causal factor in the water cannot resemble both perceptions. In order to justify this further conclusion, it must be presupposed that the resemblance in question is specific, *i.e.* it is about a determinate qualitative temperature and not qualitative temperature in general.²⁸ If the cause in the water can be only either warm or cold, it is not possible that it is specifically similar to both as a determinate temperature.

²⁸ Here I make a distinction between qualitative and quantitative temperature to distinguish the feeling of it from measuring it.

In the conclusion of the first part of the argument, Hume does not actually do anything else but turn this around. As the causal factor in the water cannot specifically resemble both warmth and cold, it is also so in the other direction. At least one of these perceptions is not thus specifically similar to the causal factor. For the sake of simplicity, let us suppose that it is the feeling of warmth although Hume expresses it more generally in proposition (5). For that general statement, he needs proposition (4): there are many instances of this type. We can, however, focus on this particular case: the feeling of warmth does not specifically resemble the causal factor in the water.

Though it is not explicit in the text, the second part of Hume's argument consists of two phases. In the first causal phase, his intent is to extend the result of the first part to the other actual perceptions. In our example, this means that the perception of cold is not similar to the causal factor in the water either. For reaching this conclusion, Hume uses the second part of his fourth rule of causal reasoning (proposition 7): from similar effects we infer similar causes (T 1.3.15.6). How is this rule supposed to do the needed job?

Hume's argument seems to run as follows. At this point, we know that the feeling of warmth does not specifically resemble its cause in the water. Since warmth and cold are similar on a more general level as qualitative temperatures, we are supposed to use the fourth rule. From these premises, it seems to follow that their causes are similar on a more general level, too. Thus, they, or actually the causal factor in the water is not of the *kind* of qualitative temperature. The feeling of cold cannot therefore resemble it

either, neither as a determinate feeling of temperature nor as belonging to the category of qualitative temperatures.

The inductive use of the fourth rule is to generalise this conclusion to concern any perception of proper sensibles. First we need to remember that perceiving proper sensibles varies a lot, of which this is only one illustration. Secondly, as all the perceptions of proper sensibles are of the same type, the inductive use of Hume's fourth rule is supposed to warrant extending the result of the causal phase of the second part to every possible perception of proper sensibles. They have similar causes in respect of not resembling the perceptions of proper sensibles.

For the purposes of this paper, however, it is the causal phase of the second part that is relevant. The problem lies there. In the first place, Loeb objects that from the specific dissimilarity of the perception of warmth to the causal factor in the water, it does not follow that the feeling of cold does not resemble it either. Hume's mistake is to dismiss specific differences for the sake of more general similarities. (Loeb 2002: 221) Loeb's conclusion is thus that the argument for the PSP "is far from just and regular"; Hume is hasty in his endorsement of it (Ibid. 222).

In order to understand Loeb's criticism, we must reconsider Hume's argument. We can focus on the properties of the water and the perceptions of it instead of their possible resemblance.

The result of the first part of the argument is that the causal factor in the water cannot be both warm and cold. We made the supposition that the water is not warm. The problem lies in inferring from this lack of a determinate property that the water cannot have *any* property of that determinable kind. From the fact that x does not have a particular property of the determinable kind K , it does not follow that it cannot have any property of the kind K . The water not being warm does not warrant us to conclude that it cannot have some other qualitative temperature, cold, for example. (Even in the case that we perceive it to have these different temperatures.) At least without some extra premises, it is entirely possible that in the sense-variation cases of proper sensibles, one of our perceptions resembles its cause in a Real body.

Hume's fourth rule on a more specific level does not help either. The cause of the feeling of warmth in the water is not itself warm. According to the fourth rule, the cause of the perception of cold must be similar to the cause of the perception of warmth (perceptions are similar as temperatures). Thus, it must be of the kind "not-warm" (in the more general argument, the conclusion is "not qualitative temperature"). The problem is that all other qualitative temperatures belong to that kind – cold included.

Hence Loeb thinks that Hume's argument for the PSP is fundamentally flawed. He writes that it is as if Hume has forgotten his sixth rule of causal reasoning, according

to which the difference in the effects must be due to the difference between their causes (T 1.3.15.8). (Loeb 2002: 221) However, it is not certain that rule six might have made Hume to see the flaw of his argument. All we can infer by the sixth rule in the water case is that there is a difference in the total cause of the different sense-impressions. The causal factor in the water is an invariant circumstance in the total cause. The sixth rule alone does not help us to see the problem of the argument.

A more fundamental reply to Loeb's criticism can be detected by reflecting on another point he makes. Loeb wonders why Hume indicates that the argument was common among modern philosophers (EHU 12.1.15, and T 1.4.4.3). Neither Locke nor Berkeley advances it. (Loeb 2002: 218-20) It is true that Hume's argument appears to be causal when it is considered on its own, whereas Berkeley's argument for the PSP is grounded on the notion of arbitrariness. Faced with the sense-variation regarding the perceptions of proper sensibles, it would be arbitrary, Berkeley claims, to prefer one to another. In order to avoid this ungrounded preference, we have to conclude that Real body does not have any proper sensible properties whatsoever - if there are Real bodies. (DHP 73; Works II, 186)²⁹

²⁹ Russell uses the same argument to the result that we immediately sense "sense-data", which "depend upon the relations between us and the object." (Russell 1912, 16 and 8-11) Berkeley (1998) is cited by DHP page number; Works II, page number (referring to Berkeley, G. (1948-57) *The Works of George Berkeley*, 9 vols., ed. A.A. Luce and T.E. Jessop, London: Nelson)

Although this is how Loeb reads Berkeley, he does not see how Hume's argument can be read in the same way as Berkeley's argument (Loeb 2002: 220). However, recall that the second part of Hume's argument works on the parity of proper sensibles as qualitative properties. Could Hume's point be that their causes in Real bodies are also, by the fourth rule, on par as dissimilar to their effects? Is it possible to read the argument in the way that preferring some proper sensible quality as similar to its Real cause would be arbitrary - given that the experience of the variation and the rules of causal reasoning are everything that we have?

Perhaps this is a possible reading of the argument and it calls for further research, for which there is no room here. Nevertheless, the argument does not explicitly speak about arbitrariness or anything concomitant to it. Therefore it seems to me that we ought to prefer Loeb's interpretation of the argument. On that reading, his objection to the argument hits the target. Hume's argument for the PSP really involves a gap.

After reconstructing the argument and observing a real hole in it, we can now discuss whether there is also another gap as Garrett suggests. If he is correct, it may give us a reason to doubt Hume's endorsement of the argument and the PSP – or at least the certainty of his belief in the PSP. (Garrett 1997: 219) Garrett's point is that even if we succeeded in showing that the causal factor in the water is not itself of any qualitative temperature, it would not prove that the water taken in its entirety cannot have some

qualitative temperature. The argument concerns rather the causal factor of the water to produce certain sense-impressions in us than the water in its entirety.

It seems to be clear that the possibility of this gap – or that of the first - does not surface in Hume’s formulation of the argument. This may suggest at least three things. The first possibility is that there is a hidden premise that closes the gap and from Hume's point of view, the argument goes through. For example, according to the corpuscularian hypothesis, the Real water consists only of the corpuscles and it is their movement that is the (partial) cause of our feelings of warmth and cold. There is not thus anything else in the water than the corpuscles and their movement that could resemble these perceptions. The second explanation is that Hume sees the gap and in his view, the conclusion of the argument, the PSP, is possibly false. The argument is merely a good probable argument. The third possibility is that Hume does not realise the problem and accordingly his argument might be defective but he just does not get it. Although we may wonder how a great philosopher can be blind to such a basic mistake, this is how things seem to be in the case of the gap observed by Loeb.

Garrett’s objection is based on his claim that the second possibility is the correct interpretation here. It is possible for Hume to doubt the PSP although he takes the argument for it as “satisfactory”, “regular”, and “just” (T 1.4.4.3, 15, 1.4.7.4). Garret thus thinks that the dubious nature of Hume’s argument in Garrett’s opinion raises doubts about Hume’s commitment to its conclusion. (Garrett 1997: 218-9)

This is, in my view, the first of two problems in this worry that I take to be sufficient for answering it. In the first place, even if Garrett is right in his doubts about the argument, it alone does not constitute evidence for Hume taking it as such or as a merely probable argument, without further support from the text. As far as I can see, there is no such support; Hume appears to be either blind to the possibility of the gap or he presupposes something in the argument that rules it out.³⁰ It would be rather strange from Hume to think that an argument is possibly defective and therefore merely probable without making it explicit.

The second problem in Garrett's worry is connected to the first that there is no textual evidence for it. On the contrary, there is strong textual evidence against it in the very context of the argument. As I said above, Garrett acknowledges that Hume takes the argument to be a just but only probable argument. Normally he is a careful reader of Hume, but here it is unfortunate that he misses one important passage. I have already observed that in T 1.4.4.4 Hume clearly claims that the PSP is the most convincing.

From these problems it also follows that the second possible interpretation of the potential gap located by Garrett cannot be correct.³¹ In the *Treatise*, Hume does not consider the argument for the PSP as possibly defective and therefore a merely

³⁰ Although Loeb takes Hume's argument to be defective, he does not draw, rightly in my opinion, the conclusion that Hume rejects its conclusion. On the contrary, Loeb thinks that Hume endorses it (Loeb 2002: 222).

probable argument. Garrett's third challenge cannot thus shake the interpretation that Hume endorses the PSP.

Three other doubts about Hume's subscription to the PSP and its rationality have also been overcome. We have thus good enough reasons to believe that he embraces this principle. However, we have not yet settled the problem how certain his belief in the PSP is. I think it is possible to give a definitive answer of the *Treatise*, but the evidence in the later texts is not decisive. As was seen just above, Hume claims in the *Treatise* that the PSP is convincing of the highest conceivable degree. According to what Garrett calls Hume's "Conceivability Criterion of Possibility", conceivability implies possibility (1997: 24). So no inductive claim can be more convincing than the PSP. Of course, it cannot be Humean intuitive or demonstrative knowledge. The PSP is a contingent truth. Still it is a conclusion of what Hume calls a "proof" in contrast to a "probability", which is Garrett's view of it and the principle. According to this distinction, proofs are "arguments, which are deriv'd from the relation of cause and effect, and which are entirely free from doubt and uncertainty." (T 1.3.11.2) As the PSP is the most certain, it must be totally free from uncertainty (excluding the possibility of falsehood implied by contingency). In the *Treatise*, Hume's view is then that the PSP is based on a firm inductive-causal proof.

³¹ Whether the first or the third is the correct interpretation is an interesting question and it has philosophical implications. It is not, however, relevant for the purposes of this paper.

In the later texts, Hume seems to be more reserved although he speaks about a discovery, proof, establishing, certainty and what we are able to establish. In the light of these texts, it is completely possible that Hume changed his view about the certainty of the PSP and of the argument for it. In them, he may take them as merely “probable” - Garrett can be right about Hume's mature position. Yet I think the evidence strongly suggests that the PSP is at least highly probable in Hume's mature view. So even he does not consider it as based on a “proof” any longer, he continues to embrace the PSP and its rationality.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have defended two main theses. First, Hume has an insight into the core of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities in what I call the Proper Sensibles Principle: proper sensible qualities are not Real properties of material substance and Real bodies. Hume is right when he claims that most 'new philosophers' who included material substance into their system endorsed this principle.

My second main thesis is that Hume embraces the Proper Sensibles Principle because it is well-grounded on inductive-causal, Humean reason. I have showed that there is sufficient textual evidence for taking Hume to assent to the rationality of PSP in his writings from different periods. It is also most likely that that rationality is of the inductive-causal, Humean type.

When Hume's endorsement of the PSP and its rationality is established, the argument that the second profound argument against the senses and T 1.4.4.6-15 are really his own reasonings can really take off. Its implication is that Hume's metaphysics of body must be non-materialist and his philosophy non-Realist in general.³²

³² I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professors Kenneth P. Winkler (Yale), Don Garrett (NYU), Eric Schliesser (Ghent), Dr Peter Kail (Oxford), and the editor Peter Anstey for corrections, comments and criticism. I am also grateful for the invitation to and the comments of the audience in the workshop *Early Modern Epicureanism and Anti-Epicureanism*, University of Leiden, Holland, 11/4/2008.

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