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Abstract: This paper argues that Hume's central concern in T 1.4.7 is to find a way to rely upon his cognitive faculties in spite of what he has learned about them in the preceding sections of part 4. The trouble is that having identified the understanding with "the general and more establish'd properties of the imagination" (T 1.4.7.6; SBN 267), Hume finds that these properties cannot function apart from other "seemingly trivial" ones, which calls into question the trustworthiness of his cognitive faculties. I claim that Hume justifies this reliance by appealing to what Don Garrett has termed the "title principle," which enables him to practice "true scepticism" by being diffident of his philosophical doubts as well as of his philosophical conviction" (T 1.4.7.14; SBN 273).

At the end of T 1.4.2,[1] after examining the skeptical arguments against the claims of both reason and sense perception and affirming the futility of the familiar philosophical responses to them, Hume reflects that,

> [t]his sceptical doubt, both with respect to reason and the senses, is a malady, which can never be radically cur'd, but must return upon us at every moment, however we may chace it away, and sometimes may seem entirely free from it. 'Tis impossible upon any system to defend either our understanding or senses; and we but expose them farther when we

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> endeavour to justify them in that manner. As the sceptical doubt arises naturally from a profound and intense reflection on those subjects, it always increases, the farther we carry our reflections, whether in opposition or conformity to it. Carelessness and in-attention alone can afford us any remedy. (T 1.4.2.57; SBN 218)

And, returning to this thought at the very end of Book 1, after having described the skeptical crisis brought about by his reflections on the weakness of his cognitive faculties and affirmed his subsequent recommitment to philosophy based on "sceptical principles," Hume remarks that,

> [t]he conduct of a man, who studies philosophy in this careless manner, is more truly sceptical than that of one, who feeling himself an inclination to it, is yet so over-whelm'd with doubts and scruples, as totally to reject it. A true sceptic will be diffident of his philosophical doubts, as well as of his philosophical conviction; and will never refuse any innocent satisfaction, which offers itself, upon account of either of them. (T 1.4.7.14; SBN 273)

Although Hume's provocative references to carelessness as a means for countering skeptical doubt have hardly gone unnoticed, perhaps the most detailed and influential treatment of the topic in the recent literature is by Annette Baier. Noting that by "careless" Hume means "carefree" rather than "negligent," Baier argues that the philosophically fruitful carelessness consists essentially in a liberation from the "anxieties and tyranny of obsessive theorizing."[2] Accordingly, on her view, the unsettling doubts concerning both reason and the senses from which Hume seeks liberation through carelessness are the products of a misguided rationalism, which fails to realize the basis of reason in sentiment. Similarly, for Baier, Hume's call for a new attitude in doing philosophy is addressed mainly to "those converted ex-rationalists who will follow him in his turn away from intellect's 'cold and general speculation,' into his new investigation of the whole mind by the whole mind," that is to say, into his sentimentalist program, which is then carried out in Books 2 and 3.[3]

By contrast, I shall argue that the doubts which led Hume, at least temporarily, into a state of "philosophical melancholy and delirium" (T 1.4.7.9; SBN 269) are not those of a one-time rationalist but of Hume himself.[4] Moreover, they are brought about by Hume's reflections on the operations of the mind *as he has described them*. In other words, these doubts express the misgivings of a naturalist, who finds himself in a skeptical morass as the direct result of his own discoveries regarding the actual workings of the human mind, that is, through his awareness of "the strange infirmities of human understanding, *even in its most perfect*

state" (EHU 12.24; SBN 161; my emphasis).[5] And if this is correct, it suggests that Hume's carelessness or, as I shall henceforth call it, his philosophical insouciance, amounts to something more than the breezy dismissal of the worries generated by an overheated rationalism. Rather, I shall argue, it presupposes the seriousness and unanswerability by traditional means of the skeptical threat revealed by Hume's reflections and constitutes the essence of his novel attempt to account for the possibility of his own project in face of this threat.

My analysis consists of four parts. The first briefly traces the background of the worries that Hume raises in T 1.4.7. It argues that their source is not, as is sometimes thought, the realization that causal inference is the product of the associative mechanism of the imagination rather than of an autonomous reason (which is just Hume's core naturalistic thesis), but a series of conclusions at which Hume arrived in the preceding sections of T 1.4. Although some of these conclusions are extremely controversial, for present purposes I shall take them at face value, since they are presupposed by the problematic which I am interested in exploring. The second part of the analysis examines the skeptical crisis in which Hume finds himself enmeshed as a result of further reflection on the implications of these conclusions. The third part, which constitutes the heart of the paper, analyzes the process and means through which Hume endeavors to resolve this crisis and return to philosophy on the basis of his new found insouciance. It culminates in a consideration of what Don Garrett has termed the "title principle,"[6] which I interpret as providing Hume a warrant for his insouciance, and thereby for philosophizing on "sceptical principles." The fourth part, which is something of a speculative appendix, considers the question of the possible justification of this principle. In so doing, it sketches and attributes (at least implicitly) to Hume an argument which is circular but not viciously so, and which differs from the seemingly stronger anti-skeptical argument that one might think was available to Hume at this juncture.

I

Although the issue remains highly controversial, a central thesis in many recent readings of the *Treatise* is that Hume is not bothered by skeptical worries in T 1.3. According to these readings, when Hume affirms that causal inference is based on the imagination rather than reason, he does not intend to cast doubt on the legitimacy of such inference. In short, he is not a skeptic about induction, at least not if by that is meant someone who doubts the reliability of inductive inference.

There are, however, several variants of this non-skeptical reading, which fall roughly into two groups. One, of which Baier is a leading representative, holds that, rather than inductive practices per se, Hume's target is only excessively rationalistic or, more precisely, Cartesian, accounts of the requirements

of such reasoning. Consequently, for proponents of this reading, Hume positively addresses the normative issue already in T 1.3 in his own naturalistic or sentimentalist terms.[7] An alternative non-skeptical approach, which has achieved some popularity in the recent literature, denies that Hume is drawing any skeptical conclusions (at least in this portion of the *Treatise*) because he is not drawing *any* normative conclusions at all. Thus, according to Don Garrett, who is a strong advocate of this view, in denying that inductive inferences are "determin'd by reason," Hume is advancing a thesis in cognitive psychology rather than normative epistemology.[8] And, considered as such, this thesis has no skeptical implications.[9]

Although I believe that there is textual support for both sides of this hermeneutical dispute, and perhaps for other alternatives as well, I do not propose to take a stand on the issue here.[10] For present purposes, it suffices to call attention to some of the features of Hume's account in T 1.3 that are emphasized by virtually all non-skeptical readings. First, as is often pointed out, even by critics who accuse him of blatant inconsistency on this score, Hume's entire account of the understanding (and, indeed, his whole project of a "science of man") is based on inductive inferences and, therefore, presupposes their legitimacy. Second, he has no hesitancy in drawing a sharp normative distinction between "philosophical" and "unphilosophical probability," that is, between legitimate and illegitimate forms of empirical inference. Third, and perhaps most important, Hume includes a section (T 1.3.15) devoted to the specification of "rules by which to judge of causes and effects." These rules, which, as is often noted, anticipate Mill in many respects, amount to a canon of inductive reasoning on which Hume relies throughout the *Treatise*. And this is certainly not what one would expect from an inductive skeptic.

Moreover, after disparaging the ancient philosophers for being seduced by "every trivial propensity of the imagination" (T 1.4.3.11; SBN 224), Hume defends himself against the charge of inconsistency in leveling such a criticism (on the grounds that he had himself made the imagination the judge of all systems of philosophy) by introducing a normative distinction *within* the imagination, which at least roughly correlates with the traditional distinction *between* the intellect *and* the imagination. In the Humean account, the distinction is "betwixt the principles which are permanent, irresistable, and universal; such as the customary transition from causes to effects, and from effects to causes: And the principles, which are changeable, weak and irregular." The former, he suggests, "are the foundation of all our thoughts and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin." The latter, by contrast, far from being either necessary or even useful, "are observ'd only to take place in weak minds, and being opposite to the other principles of custom and reasoning, may easily be subverted by a due contrast and opposition" (T 1.4.1.1; SBN 225).

The former set of principles constitutes Hume's own naturalized conception of the understanding, which he later identifies with "the general and more establish'd properties of the imagination" (T 1.4.7.6; SBN 267). The basic problem, however, is that the application of principles belonging to the former set turn out to be dependent on those belonging to the latter, which Hume deems "seemingly trivial." And we shall see that the latter's seeming triviality stems not from their lack of psychological force, but from the fact that they produce beliefs in ways that appear to be totally irrelevant to the truth of these beliefs.[11] Moreover, the dependence of the "general and more establish'd properties of the imagination" on the seemingly trivial ones raises questions about the tenability of the sharp distinction on which Hume's naturalized conception of normativity appears to be based.

Ironically, the situation in which Hume finds himself parallels his Berkeley-inspired critique of the primary-secondary quality distinction to which I shall return below. Just as Hume (following Berkeley) argues that, in spite of seemingly being based on solid reasoning, this distinction breaks down because the former set of qualities turn out to be dependent on and, therefore, inseparable from, the latter, so Hume's own sharp distinction between two sets of principles or properties of the imagination threatens to break down for similar reasons.

Hume signals the nature of his concern at the very beginning of his concluding section. Appealing to the familiar metaphor of a sea voyage to characterize his project, he questions the wisdom of continuing this voyage (writing the last two books of the *Treatise*), after "having narrowly escap'd ship-wreck in passing a small frith" and finding himself ensconced in "the same leaky weather-beaten vessel" in which he had proceeded up to this point (T 1.4.7.1; SBN 263). Presumably, the latter refers to the understanding, that is, the above-mentioned "general and more establish'd principles of the imagination" on which Hume has relied up to this point. And, continuing with the metaphor, this vessel is "weather-beaten" as a result of the skeptical storms it has encountered in the preceding sections of part 4; while it has only narrowly escaped being wrecked by these storms because of the fortuitous intervention of the above-mentioned seemingly trivial propensities of the imagination. Thus, the question is whether Hume can continue to rely upon being rescued by such unlikely means.

The first of these "storms" is depicted in T 1.4.1. It initially threatens demonstrative reasoning, which was supposedly the most secure against skeptical assault, but then extends its reach to probable reasoning as well. The outcome of this much maligned skeptical argument is that reason, if it were left entirely to its own devices, would inevitably subvert itself, eventually destroying all belief through the continuous iteration of the reflexive assessment of its own activity. Appealing to his theory of belief, Hume notes that the only thing that prevents this from occurring is the inability of the imagination to retain its focus beyond the initial steps of the process. In short, reason is saved from subverting itself by the fact that it is *not* left

to its own devices, but is instead subject to what Hume will later characterize as a "seemingly trivial property of the fancy" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 268).

Hume concludes his discussion of this form of skepticism by turning on its head the familiar dogmatic attempt to mount a *reductio* against the skeptical challenge to reason. According to the latter, in using rational argumentation to challenge the authority of reason, the skeptic is tacitly assuming its authority. Thus, if the skeptic's arguments are strong they undermine themselves; whereas if they are weak they may be safely ignored. In response, Hume suggests that the dogmatist's victory over the skeptic by these means is merely pyrrhic, because such skepticism only undermines itself by first undermining the authority of reason, thereby providing small comfort for the dogmatist. And, in light of this, he remarks,

> 'Tis happy, therefore, that nature breaks the force of all sceptical arguments in time, and keeps them from having any considerable influence on the understanding. Were we to trust entirely to their self-destruction, that can never take place, 'till they have first subverted all conviction, and have totally destroy'd human reason. (T 1.4.1.12; SBN 187)

I shall not here attempt to assess the merits of this skeptical argument, though I shall return to Hume's critique of the traditional dogmatic response to it in the final section of this paper. For the present, I wish only to point out that the argument applies to Hume's own naturalized conception of reason as well as to the traditional conception he attacks throughout the *Treatise*.[12] First, Hume clearly regards the propensity of reason to check its own operations before placing full confidence in their outcome as appropriate rather than as an absurd requirement of some misguided, overly scrupulous form of rationalism.[13] The problem is only that once this process is set in motion there appears to be no principled point at which one may bring it to a halt. Second, Hume's whole account is predicated on the explicitly naturalistic conception of reason "as a kind of cause, of which truth is the natural effect; but such-a-one as by the irruption of other causes, and by the inconstancy of our mental powers, may frequently be prevented" (T 1.4.1; SBN 180). Finally, the progressive diminution in probability, which is supposedly produced by the iterative examination, is viewed as the expected outcome of a causal process that is required by "all the rules of logic" and only prevented from occurring by the above-mentioned inability or weakness of the imagination.[14]

This fairly cryptic account of skepticism regarding reason is followed by Hume's much lengthier and more complex analysis of the belief in the continued and independent existence of body (T 1.4.2; SBN 187–218). As before, it is the analysis of the natural operations of the mind that appears to threaten a fundamental natural belief. After summarily dismissing the claims of both the senses and reason (causal

inference) to be the source of this belief, Hume devotes the bulk of his attention to an explanation of how it is produced by the only remaining alternative: the imagination. He assumes the "vulgar view" that the only objects in question are perceptions and attempts to show how the belief in continued existence might be generated by the imagination on the basis of the available perceptual data. The upshot of the matter is that this belief is illusory, resulting from the inflation of resembling into identical perceptions, which is reinforced by the fictional assumption of the continued existence of these perceptions when not being perceived.

As a result of its dubious origin, Hume points out that the belief in the continued existence of objects is highly unstable and unable to survive "a very little reflection and philosophy" (T 1.4.2.44; SBN 210). The problem, however, is that though philosophy is perfectly capable of undermining this belief, it turns out to be incapable of providing a viable alternative. In fact, Hume argues that the received theory on the matter (Lockean representative realism), which he refers to as the doctrine of "double existence" (fleeting perceptions and enduring objects), has no independent warrant and derives whatever specious plausibility it has from the vulgar view it supposedly supplants (T 1.4.2.49; SBN 213). Finally, as the outcome of this reflection, Hume remarks that even though he began with the assumption that he ought to place an implicit faith in his senses, he now feels himself "more inclin'd to repose no faith at all in my senses, or rather imagination, than to place in it such an implicit confidence." This, Hume explains, is because he "cannot conceive how such *trivial* qualities of the fancy, conducted by such false suppositions, can ever lead to any solid and rational system" (T 1.4.2.56; SBN 217; my emphasis). Thus, it once again turns out that a fundamental belief is crucially dependent on conditions that seem to discredit it.

Apart from T 1.4.4, which introduces a serious problem concerning the compatibility of two equally necessary principles of the imagination, the intervening sections of part 4 contribute to Hume's skeptical crisis mainly by providing further evidence of the inability of "philosophical systems," be they ancient or modern, be they concerned with the external or the internal world, to provide viable foundations for our beliefs.[15] Accordingly, in spite of the considerable intrinsic interest of parts of Hume's diffuse discussion of these matters, I shall here set them aside and turn instead directly to Hume's account of his crisis in T 1.4.7.

II

Hume begins his account of the skeptical crisis, which supposedly arose from his reflections on the matters discussed above, in an autobiographical mode, lamenting the wretched condition of his cognitive faculties and his deplorable psychological state, and only then turning to a consideration of the cognitive infirmities common to human nature. Our present concern lies mainly with the

latter, however, since these are presumably the sources of the "leaks" that have been uncovered by Hume's analysis of the understanding. The entire discussion presupposes Hume's conception of belief as consisting solely in the vivacity of an idea. Posing the issue in terms of the traditional skeptical challenge to provide a criterion of truth, Hume admits that on his view he can offer no reason to accept the opinions at which he has arrived other than "a *strong* propensity to consider objects *strongly* in that view, under which they appear to me" (T 1.4.7.3; SBN 265). This seems to be a singularly inadequate criterion, however, particularly when we keep in mind that this strong propensity is itself the product of the mechanism of habit based on experience. As Hume puts it, "Without this quality, by which the mind enlivens certain ideas beyond others (which seemingly is so trivial and so little founded on reason) we could never assent to any argument, nor carry our view beyond those few objects, which are presented to the senses." In fact, Hume points out, the situation appears even worse, since, as he had supposedly shown, our sensory knowledge is limited to what is immediately present to consciousness and there are no grounds for assuming that our memory presents us with true pictures of past perceptions. Finally, combining all these points, Hume concludes that, "[t]he memory, senses, and understanding are, therefore, all of them founded on the imagination, or the vivacity of our ideas" (T 1.4.7.3; SBN 265).

This conclusion recapitulates the essence of Hume's theory of belief and his account of the operations of the mind as they have been presented up to this point. In so doing, it indicates why he might hesitate placing trust in his beliefs (whether it be a matter of sensing, remembering, or inferring), inasmuch as they have been shown to consist in nothing more than the vivacity possessed by certain ideas. Nevertheless, rather than constituting the heart of Hume's concern, I believe that these general considerations are best seen as forming a prologue to the discussion of the more specific worries, which actually lead him to his skeptical crisis. The first of these concerns the threat of a conflict between causal inference and the belief in the continued existence of objects when not being perceived. Although these are equally natural and necessary operations of the mind, Hume reflects that, "in some circumstances they are directly contrary, nor is it possible for us to reason justly and regularly from causes and at the same time believe the continu'd existence of matter" (T 1.4.7.4; SBN 266).

Hume is here alluding to the previously mentioned outcome of his analysis of the modern philosophy, the core doctrine of which he took to be the subjectivity of secondary qualities. He had begun this analysis by expressing his approval of one of the arguments advanced in support of this doctrine, namely, the argument from perceptual variability. The basic idea is that the manifest variation of our perceptions of colors, sounds, and so forth under different conditions indicates that many of these perceptions must be nothing more than impressions in the mind, having "no external model or archetype." And, reasoning on the basis of

the principle that "from like effects we presume like causes" (a variant of rule 4), Hume concurred with the modern philosophy that it is reasonable to conclude that "all of them [are] derive'd from a like origin" (T 1.4.4.4; SBN 227). Assuming that if body exists, at all, it must be composed of *something*, this leaves as the sole remaining candidates the primary qualities, which he identifies as "extension and solidity, with their different mixtures and modifications; figure, motion, gravity, and cohesion" (T 1.4.4.5; SBN 227). But, exploiting a famous argument used by Berkeley to reject the conception of material substance, Hume maintained that the sharp distinction between primary and secondary qualities that is essential to the modern philosophy is unsustainable, since the former are inseparable from the latter.[16] However, rather than drawing Berkeley's immaterialist conclusion, Hume underscored the skeptical implications of this result. As he there put it,

> Thus there is a direct and total opposition betwixt our reason and our senses; or more properly speaking, betwixt those conclusions we form from cause and effect, and those that persuade us of the continu'd and independent existence of body. 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. (T 1.4.4.15; SBN 231)

Hume initially used this conflict between the outcome of causal reasoning regarding the perceived qualities of bodies and our unshakable belief in their continued and distinct existence to deflate the pretension of the modern philosophy to be the "true philosophy"; but his reference to it in T 1.4.7 is intended to indicate that it likewise poses a serious problem for his own account, which, in spite of his pointed criticism of the modern philosophy, occupies some common ground with it.[17] As already noted, this common ground includes the argument from perceptual variability, which Hume endorses as a legitimate piece of causal reasoning—one stemming from the "permanent, irresistable, and universal" principles of the imagination. Thus, what we now see is that such reasoning can lead to conclusions that conflict with other principles of the imagination with the same status. In short, we learn that there is a conflict between core principles of the imagination, the very instrument on which Hume must rely in his voyage of philosophical discovery.[18] Moreover, Hume claims to be at a loss regarding the question of how to "adjust these principles together" (T 1.4.7.5; SBN 266), thereby indicating that the problem is to find some systematic manner of dealing with the conflict.[19]

A second worry to which Hume refers is a consequence of his analysis of the origin and referent of the idea of necessary connection. As Hume sees it, the inherent goal of enquiry (including his own) is to establish true causal connections rather than

merely contingent conjunctions, which he takes to mean that we are not satisfied "before we are acquainted with that energy in the cause, by which it operates on its effect; that tie, which connects them together; and that efficacious quality, on which the tie depends" (T 1.4.7.5; SBN 266). Hume's analysis had shown, however, that this sought-for connection "lies merely in ourselves" and consists in nothing more than the custom-based determination of the mind to pass from an impression to an associated lively idea. But such a discovery, Hume now suggests, threatens to undermine all enquiry, "since it appears, that when we say we desire to know the ultimate and operating principle, as something, which resides in the external object, we either contradict ourselves or talk without a meaning" (T 1.4.7.5; SBN 267).[20]

Hume acknowledges that "[t]his deficiency in our ideas" is not noted in common life, just as we tend to ignore the fact that we are as ignorant of the ultimate principle binding cause and effect in the most familiar as in the most extraordinary cases. For Hume, however, it is the propensity to ignore this deficiency, rather than the nature of the causal relation itself, that is the real source of the problem, since it "proceeds merely from an illusion of the imagination" (T 1.4.7.6; SBN 267). Although Hume does not here tell us anything about this illusion, we may surmise from his account of the idea of necessary connection that it consists in taking what is merely a subjective determination of the imagination as an objective feature of the world, which results from a propensity of the imagination to project or "spread" its determinations onto objects.[21] Thus, the quandary in which Hume now seemingly finds himself is the direct result of his own enquiries. Having lost his epistemic innocence and become aware of the true basis of the belief that necessary connections hold in the world, how can he proceed with business as usual?

Given his deflationary analysis of causality, Hume's worry at this point is more than a little surprising, since it suggests that he still somehow felt it necessary to rely upon the illusory idea of necessary connection as an objective feature of the world. In any event, it leads him to ask the decisive normative question which governs the remainder of his reflections, namely, "how far we ought to yield to these illusions." And, in attempting to answer this question, Hume finds himself suddenly confronted with what he terms "a very dangerous dilemma." On the one hand, generalizing from his acquiescence to this presumably indispensable illusion, he could "assent to every trivial suggestion of the fancy"; or, alternatively, he might resolve "to reject all the trivial suggestions of the fancy, and adhere to the understanding, that is, to the general and more establish'd properties of the imagination" (T 1.4.7.6; SBN 267). In short, Hume is struggling to find a consistent position, which seems to require him to choose between two contrary general rules, one of which calls for the acceptance and the other the rejection of "every trivial suggestion of the fancy." Presumably, at this stage at least, the problem cannot be avoided simply by accepting some while rejecting other trivial (or "seemingly trivial") suggestions, since any such selection would itself be entirely arbitrary.

Nevertheless, in view of the obvious unacceptability of the first alternative and the apparent reasonableness of the second, one might wonder why Hume takes himself to be confronted with a dilemma at all at this juncture, not to mention "a very dangerous one." What would be wrong or "dangerous" in adhering to the understanding, once it is redefined as a subset of the properties of the imagination? After all, what is supposedly important on a Humean account is not that reasoning be based on principles of the imagination, since that is unavoidable, but that it be based on the right ones. And, clearly, for Hume, these would be those that stem from its "more general and establish'd properties."

As Hume makes clear, however, the problem lies not in the reliance upon the understanding so construed, but in the fact that this reliance, as it is here characterized, requires the rejection of "*all* the trivial suggestions of the fancy" (my emphasis). Hume is here alluding to the argument of T 1.4.1, which, he now reminds us, had shown two things: 1) "that the understanding, when it acts alone, and according to its most general principles, entirely subverts itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition, either in philosophy or common life"; and 2) that a "total scepticism" was avoided only by means of a "singular and seemingly trivial property of the fancy, by which we enter with difficulty into remote views of things" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 267–8). Since by the understanding acting alone is clearly meant its acting independently of this property, it follows that under that condition it would subvert itself. Consequently, it seems that, in addition to its "general and more establish'd properties," Hume is forced to rely upon at least one such "seemingly trivial property," which precludes accepting the second horn of the dilemma.

Given the unavoidability of such a reliance, Hume entertains the possibility of evading the dilemma in which he has found himself enmeshed by proposing a new rule or "general maxim," namely, "that no refin'd or elaborate reasoning is ever to be receiv'd" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 268). Since it is only in the latter type of reasoning that the understanding threatens to subvert itself, the obvious virtue of this rule is that it provides a way to avoid worrying about such subversion without having to rely on the above-mentioned seemingly trivial property of the imagination, which David Owen has usefully glossed as its "failure to retain vivacity through complexity."[22] In short, it seems to provide Hume with a way to preserve his epistemological integrity in the face of the threat posed to it by his analysis of the skeptical attack on reason.

It soon becomes apparent, however, that this rule is not what is called for. First of all, Hume notes that its consequence would be to "cut off entirely all science and philosophy" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 268). Thus, if Hume were to adopt this rule, he would have to abandon his project. Second, in adopting it, he would be proceeding "upon one singular quality of the imagination, and by a parity of reason must embrace them all" (ibid.). The problem here is that this move would return Hume

to the first horn of his initial dilemma, since there would no principled ground for privileging this particular seemingly trivial propensity. Finally, in adopting this rule, Hume would be directly contradicting himself, "since this maxim must be built on the preceding reasoning, which will be allow'd to be sufficiently refin'd and metaphysical" (ibid.). In other words, it would amount to using a bit of refined reasoning to reject the cogency of such reasoning.

At this point Hume finds himself at the nadir of his skeptical dialectic. In particular, he feels that he can neither accept nor reject the maxim prohibiting the reception of refined and elaborate reasoning. Hume cannot accept it for the reasons noted above; but he cannot reject it outright either, because by doing so, and thereby engaging in such reasoning, he fears that he would "subvert entirely the human understanding" (ibid.).

Inasmuch as Hume had already argued in T 1.4.1 that the complete subversion of the understanding, in the sense of the destruction of all belief through the iterated reflexive application of a probability calculus, is blocked by the inability to retain vivacity through complexity, he cannot now be claiming that the rejection of the maxim prohibiting all complex reasoning would lead to that result. Accordingly, we must rather take Hume to be suggesting that the very realization that it is *only* this seemingly trivial propensity that prevents what "all the rules of logic require" (T 1.4.1.6; SBN 183) is of itself sufficient to subvert the understanding in the somewhat oblique sense of causing him to lose confidence in the results of such reasoning.[23] In short, the same epistemological scruples, which initially led Hume into his "dangerous dilemma" are still at work. And, in light of all this, he laments:

> We have, therefore, no choice left but betwixt a false reason and none at all. For my part, I know not what ought to be done in the present case. I can only observe what is commonly done; which is, that this difficulty is seldom or never thought of; and even where it has once been present to the mind, is quickly forgot, and leaves but a small impression behind it. Very refin'd reflections have little or no influence upon us; and yet we do not, and cannot establish it for a rule, that they ought not to have any influence; which implies a manifest contradiction. (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 268)

As I read this passage, Hume is expressing his distress over the apparently irreconcilable conflict between his epistemological scruples, which are themselves "natural" and appropriate rather than the excessive worries of a misguided Cartesian, and the results of his analysis of the operations of the imagination/understanding, that is to say, our cognitive faculties. Hume's scruples are in evidence in the final three sentences, where he poses his problem in explicitly normative terms. Thus, he observes that the fact that the "difficulty" he has uncovered is generally unrecognized (presumably, no one before Hume had thought of it) does not give

him a warrant to ignore it. Similarly, assuming for the sake of argument (though we shall soon learn that it is false) that episodes of refined reasoning, such as the one in which he has been engaged, do not make a lasting impression on the mind, Hume notes that this does not entitle him to the normative thesis that they *ought* not to have any influence, since that "implies a manifest contradiction" (ibid.).[24]

Moreover, since on this reading the maxim of rejecting all refined reasoning has already been set aside, the choice between a false reason and none at all, through which Hume defines his plight, does not, as is often assumed in the literature, involve taking a stand on it.[25] It is rather a choice between a reliance upon reason as it has been shown in truth to be, namely, a highly defective instrument, whose basic operations are dependent upon seemingly trivial propensities, and an uncompromising reliance upon a "pure reason," (my expression) which subverts itself and, therefore, is "no reason at all." Otherwise expressed, the false reason is just the instrument upon which Hume to his dismay finds that he must rely. And what makes it false is not that it leads to absurdities, but its manifest imperfections and dependencies, which, as we have seen, include a conflict between its basic principles and an unavoidable reliance upon illusion and those ubiquitous seemingly trivial propensities.

III

It follows from the proceeding considerations that Hume's task is not to find some way to avoid the dilemma of having to choose between a false reason and no reason at all, but to vindicate his continued reliance upon the former. He cannot do this, however, by arguing that, contrary to everything that has been said up to now, this reason is not really false in the sense indicated above; rather he must show that his worries, though seemingly well founded, are not sufficient to compel him to abandon his "leaky weather-beaten vessel." In other words, he needs some sort of warrant to set aside these worries and to proceed "carelessly" on his voyage.

It is in light of this that we must approach the remarkable psychodrama, which Hume describes immediately after characterizing his epistemic plight. Inasmuch as the details of this story are familiar, I shall here confine myself to a bald summary of its essential moments.[26] 1) Hume reports that, contrary to what he had previously claimed, he now finds that the reasoning in which he had been engaged has had a profound, albeit decidedly negative, effect upon him after all, namely, it has brought him to the state of philosophical melancholy and delirium. 2) He notes that this deplorable state was mercifully cured by nature, through a return to the amusements of common life. 3) But he further tells us that, far from restoring his appetite for philosophy, this experience produced a nearly lethal combination of an "indolent belief in the general maxims of the world" and a splenetic anti-philosophical animus. The indolent and splenetic Hume continues to recognize

the results of his previous investigations and is thus aware that it is only nature that determines him to yield to his senses and understanding; but he does not find in this any justification for recommitting himself to philosophy, particularly since this would require acting contrary to his present inclination and he can see no possible benefit either to himself or to mankind in doing so. In short, though cured of his philosophical melancholy and delirium, while in his present psychological state, Hume finds that neither hedonic nor altruistic considerations can motivate him to return to philosophy.

Quite apart from whatever autobiographical significance they may have, each of these stages in Hume's narrative has an important systematic function with respect to his attempt to rehabilitate his project. To begin with, the initial result is absolutely crucial because, given Hume's theory of belief, unless the kind of reasoning in which he had been engaged could have an effect on the mind, there would be no point in philosophizing, since this activity consists entirely in such reasoning. Correlatively, by showing that the philosophically paralyzing melancholy and delirium is not a permanent condition, the second stage opens up the psychological possibility of Hume's return to his project. Finally, the third stage has a two-fold significance with regard to the conditions under which such a return is possible. First, by indicating that the cessation of the melancholy and delirium did not automatically restore his appetite for philosophy, it makes it evident that something further is required. Second, it suggests that, even given the requisite restoration, a viable return must be based upon the prior recognition that it is only nature (and not some rational assurance) that underlies the trust in his senses and understanding that this project demands.

Immediately upon completing his psychological account, Hume stipulates the conditions of his possible return to philosophy in a paragraph composed of six compact sentences. Because of its complexity and significance, I shall first cite the paragraph in full (adding a number before each sentence for ease of reference) and then comment on its various components.

> (1) These are the sentiments of my spleen and indolence; and indeed I must confess, that philosophy has nothing to oppose to them, and expects a victory more from the return of a serious good-humor'd disposition, than from the force of reason and conviction. (2) In all the incidents of life we ought still to preserve our scepticism. (3) If we believe that fire warms, or water refreshes, 'tis only because it costs us too much pains to think otherwise. (4) Nay if we are philosophers it ought only to be upon sceptical principles, and from an inclination, which we feel to be employing ourselves after that matter. (5) Where reason is lively, and mixes itself with some propensity, it ought to be assented to. (6) Where it does not, it never can have any title to operate upon us. (T 1.4.7.11; SBN 270)

The first sentence contains Hume's characterization of his psychological state as being one which is incompatible with a return to philosophy and his recognition that any putative future return must be based on a change of sentiment rather than the force of argument. Given this state of affairs, the remaining five sentences specify the conditions under which Hume would philosophize, should the requisite change of sentiment occur.[27] They may be broken down into three parts. The first is composed of the second and third sentences and is concerned with the place of skepticism in common life. The second part consists of the pivotal fourth sentence, which maintains that this skepticism ought to be carried over to philosophy, where it needs to be combined with a good (non-splenetic, non-indolent) disposition in order to produce positive results. Finally, the last two sentences constitute respectively the positive and negative portions of Hume's title principle. I shall discuss these three parts in turn.

1) Skepticism and Common Life

Perhaps the first thing to note about Hume's reference to the role of skepticism in common life is the normative terms in which it is framed. Whereas the splenetic Hume had remarked simply that he "must yield to the current of nature, in submitting to [his] senses and understanding" and that in this "blind submission" he demonstrates his skeptical disposition and principles (T 1.4.7.10; SBN 269), he now suggests that one *ought* to preserve this skepticism (presumably including both the disposition and the principles) in the affairs of common life. Clearly, this requirement applies only to Hume and to other philosophers who are beset by similar skeptical worries, since the "vulgar," though likewise forced to yield to the current of nature, have neither a skeptical disposition nor principles to preserve. But what sort of skepticism is Hume recommending be preserved in common life? And why *should* it be preserved?

To begin with, it is evident that the skepticism that Hume is here advocating should not be equated with the radical or Pyrrhonian variety, since the whole point of Hume's critique of the latter is that it *cannot* be preserved in common life. Unfortunately, it is far more difficult to determine how the skepticism that Hume recommends be preserved is to be understood. On a literal reading of the text, it consists essentially in accepting the thesis that the only reason why we retain basic factual beliefs about the world, such as the beliefs that fire warms and water refreshes, is that it takes too much effort to think otherwise, which suggests Hume's indolent mood. Moreover, this formulation, which is obviously intended to be provocative, suffers from an ambiguity in the key term "think." If it is taken in the strong sense as equivalent to "believe," then, on Hume's view, it is not merely difficult but *impossible* to think otherwise, since we are supposedly conditioned to believe such things on the basis of habit and experience. Conversely, if it is taken

in the weak sense as equivalent to "imagine," then, again on Hume's view, it is relatively easy to do so, since, in spite of the habit-based associations that lead us to form beliefs, one can always envision (though not believe) the bare possibility of the opposite of any matter of fact.

This apparently leaves us with two possible readings of the problematic sentence. One is to take Hume to be making, albeit in a somewhat oblique manner, his familiar point that our basic empirical beliefs are not based on reasons to which one might attribute justificatory force. Accordingly, to be a skeptic in the affairs of common life is just to keep this truth in mind, as Hume himself allegedly did after exiting his philosophical closet. The other sees Hume as attempting to make a more complex point, one which is aimed directly at the Pyrrhonian project but has implications for his own as well. This reading sticks to a more literal interpretation of the text and turns on the construal of "think." According to this reading, the term is to be taken in an intermediate sense as equivalent to something like supposing, that is, as a propositional attitude or, in more Humean terms, a psychological state, that is weaker than belief yet stronger than merely imagining. Presumably, on Hume's view this is both possible (since it does not amount to an actual belief) and difficult (since it runs counter to what we are conditioned to believe). Moreover, if this is part of Hume's intent, then we can see him as addressing the Pyrrhonist, pointing out that the latter's attempt to assume such an attitude, which is as close as one can come to the professed goal of a total suspension of belief, is deeply misguided because the attempt is both unnatural and futile.

Since these readings are complementary I propose to adopt both. In other words, I am suggesting that in the passage in question Hume is advocating a two-fold skepticism in the affairs of common life, neither of which challenges our basic beliefs themselves. One is directed against the grounds of these beliefs and consists in pointing out that they appear to be grossly inadequate to justify the beliefs based upon them. As such, its target is the dogmatist who insists that these beliefs must have a fully rational grounding in order to be *believable*. The other is a metaskepticism directed against Pyrrhonian skepticism and points to the quixotic nature of its project.[28] This enables us to understand why Hume would recommend that such a two-fold skepticism be maintained in common life. First, acknowledging that the grounds of one's beliefs lack justificatory force is the only honest stance, since it reflects the true nature of our epistemic situation. Second, inasmuch as it is quixotic, that is to say, unnatural and futile, to call one's basic beliefs into question, there is no reason why one should attempt to do so.

2) Skepticism and Philosophy

As we have seen, Hume further argues in the passage under consideration that the skepticism operative in common life *ought to be* carried over into philosophy.

Since philosophizing is a voluntary activity and is clearly not for everyone, some inclination is required in order to have a reason to engage in it; but, assuming that the latter is present, this activity ought only to be conducted on skeptical principles. Certainly, part of what Hume means here is that one should be neither overly rash in one's philosophical pronouncements nor ambitious in the scope of one's enquiries. But it may be assumed that Hume had something more in mind than such relatively innocuous cautionary advice, and I believe that the preceding considerations regarding the nature and the function of skepticism in common life help us to understand what this is.

Spelling this out, however, requires that we keep in mind a significant difference between the two situations, which might easily be lost sight of in Hume's sudden and unexplained move from the one to the other. This difference concerns the nature of the beliefs in question. Those operative in common life are largely first-order beliefs, which we cannot give up (barring a radical change in our experience) because we are determined by nature to form them independently of reflection. By contrast, the primary belief at issue now is a second-order belief concerning the reliability of our cognitive faculties and is produced by reflection. Moreover, inasmuch as such a reflective belief is presumably vulnerable to the doubts produced by Hume's reflections on the *modus operandi* of these faculties, it might seem that Hume cannot simply carry over into philosophy the kind of skepticism he recommends in common life.

Nevertheless, this appears to be just what Hume is proposing. Although he does not argue for it explicitly, the basic point seems to be that, while we can certainly question the reliability of our cognitive faculties, we cannot avoid relying upon them. And if this is indeed Hume's point, then it parallels the situation in common life, wherein we can readily imagine, though not actually believe, that fire does not warm, water refresh, and the like. This does not, of course, prove that these faculties are trustworthy; in fact, Hume has provided many reasons to suggest that they are not. It does, however, indicate that we are constrained to assume that they generally are, at least insofar as they are governed by the appropriate principles (the rules specified in T 1.3.15).

It follows from this that, in addition to the skepticism arising from the awareness of the imperfections of our cognitive faculties, which is really a form of fallibilism, the "sceptical principles" on the basis of which Hume proposes to philosophize include a skepticism directed against the total dismissal of these faculties because of their imperfections. Thus, like the skepticism regarding the Pyrrhonian project on which Hume insists in the affairs of common life, the latter is a form of metaskepticism. This time, however, its chief target lies closer to home, since it encompasses the very doubts that had tormented him in the first place. Moreover, in this respect Humean skepticism is the direct opposite of the Pyrrhonian variety; for whereas the latter advocates a suspension of *belief*; his requires a suspension of

doubt. Hume's position on the matter is best expressed in a previously cited passage, where he writes:

> The conduct of a man, who studies philosophy in this careless manner, is more truly sceptical than that of one, who feeling himself an inclination to it, is yet so over-whelm'd with doubts and scruples, as totally to reject it. A true sceptic will be diffident of his philosophical doubts, as well as of his philosophical conviction; and will never refuse any innocent satisfaction, which offers itself, upon account of either of them. (T 1.4.7.14; SBN 273)

Hume's "true sceptic" combines the two forms of skepticism noted above. On the one hand, he is diffident about his philosophical beliefs. Such diffidence is both warranted by the lessons learned regarding the imperfections of his cognitive faculties and necessary in order to avoid lapsing into an unwarranted dogmatism. On the other hand, he is also diffident about the doubts derived from these lessons, since it remains necessary to assume the overall reliability of these faculties in spite of these doubts. Presumably, the philosopher who is diffident about the latter, that is, who maintains a certain insouciance with respect to these doubts, is "more truly sceptical" than one who succumbs to them because he recognizes that allowing these doubts to deter him entirely from philosophy (assuming that he has an inclination to philosophize) is to attribute more significance to them than they can legitimately possess.

3) The Title Principle

As we have seen, this principle states that, "[w]here reason is lively, and mixes itself with some propensity, it ought to be assented to. Where it does not, it never can have any title to operate upon us." Judging from the manner in which Hume introduces it, this is intended to be the maxim or general rule governing those who purport to philosophize on the skeptical principles described above. It consists of two parts: one specifying the conditions under which assent to a bit of philosophical reasoning is warranted; the other specifying those under which one is entitled to disregard it.

Although the first part of the principle appears to stipulate two distinct conditions, which are jointly sufficient to legitimize a bit of philosophical reasoning, namely, it must be *both* lively *and* "mix'd with some propensity," this is misleading. Since all such reasoning attains its liveliness for Hume precisely by being mixed with some propensity, the latter requirement seems redundant. Moreover, given Hume's theory of belief, the liveliness condition likewise appears redundant, as well as overly generous. Since the very nature of belief is supposed to consist entirely

in the force or vivacity, that is, the liveliness, of an idea, one cannot but assent to it under this condition. And, surely, Hume is not here claiming a license to assent to the outcome of *any* bit of lively reasoning, simply because it is lively, since that would open the floodgates to everything he wishes to repudiate.

The second part of the principle raises similar problems. Its claim that reasoning that is not both lively and mixed with some propensity can have no "title to operate upon us," also seems redundant, since on Humean principles any reasoning that *does not* mix with some propensity will *ipso facto* not be lively and, therefore, will not in fact, "operate upon us," that is, produce belief. Consequently, one wonders why Hume requires a title not to believe something, which, given his own theory of belief, he could not believe in any event.

In light of these considerations, I believe that the title principle is best seen as a second-order normative principle, the applicability of which is limited to reasoning that passes the first-order normative test. The latter is provided by Hume's rules of causal reasoning, which specify the criteria through which one distinguishes between good and bad general rules, philosophical and unphilosophical probability, and the like. The need for such a second-order principle has arisen as a result of the skeptical conclusions to which Hume was led by means of such reasoning in T 1.4. For, among other things, these have shown: 1) that even this "good" reasoning unavoidably relies upon seemingly trivial propensities of the imagination, as well as its "general and more establish'd properties," which tends to cast doubt on the overall trustworthiness of our cognitive faculties; and 2) that at least one bit of reasoning that supposedly conforms to these rules, namely, the skeptical argument of T 1.4.1, was claimed to lead to a conclusion that was rejected because it failed to meet the seemingly epistemically irrelevant liveliness condition.[29] Moreover, since the rejection of this conclusion is essential if Hume is to continue with his philosophical project, he apparently requires some sort of license to suspend the rules in this case and perhaps other cases as well.[30]

In short, Hume finds himself in need of a normative principle that will allow him to continue to rely upon his cognitive faculties in those cases in which they proceed in accordance with the appropriate rules of causal reasoning, in spite of what he has learned about their manifest imperfections, and to disregard skeptical arguments that cast doubt upon their reliability, even though these arguments proceed in accordance with the same rules. These are the respective functions of the positive and negative portions of the title principle. Together they are intended to entitle Hume to his philosophical insouciance, which is the mark of the "true sceptic." Otherwise expressed, this principle makes it possible for Hume's diffidence regarding his philosophical doubts to trump his diffidence regarding his philosophical conviction.[31]

Given this, it only remains for Hume to decide whether he should recommit himself to philosophy at all. Fortunately for both Hume and us this decision is

made for him by the reemergence of the inclination to philosophize, fostered by the passions of curiosity and ambition. As Hume puts it at the end of the paragraph in which he attributes to these passions his renewed desire to philosophize, at least with respect to the topics that are of particular interest to him and that fall broadly within the sphere of common life, "These sentiments spring up naturally in my present disposition; and shou'd I endeavour to banish them, by attaching myself to any other business or diversion, I *feel* I shou'd be a loser in point of pleasure; and this is the origin of my philosophy" (T 1.4.7.12; SBN 271).

Both Hume's at least partly hedonic justification of his philosophizing and the role assigned therein to the passions of curiosity and ambition are familiar topics in the literature. What is perhaps not so familiar is the doxastic function that Hume effectively assigns to these passions as vivacity producers and retainers. In other words, it is primarily by their means that the understanding is able to remain focused throughout a complex bit of philosophical reasoning, which is, in turn, necessary if this reasoning is to produce belief. In fact, the suitability of curiosity or, as Hume also terms it the "love of truth," for such a function is implicit in his account of the passion. Thus, in his discussion of it in Book 2, Hume points out that the mere possession of a truth is not, of itself, a source of satisfaction, and that "[t]he first and most considerable circumstance requisite to render truth agreeable, is the genius and capacity, which is employ'd in its invention and discovery" (T 2.3.10.1; SBN 449). But since the refined and elaborate reasoning that philosophy involves is precisely the sort that requires the employment of genius and capacity, it will also naturally tend to awaken our curiosity and thereby keep our attention.[32] Moreover, although to my knowledge Hume never develops the point, a similar story might also be told about ambition. For if this passion could lead someone to engage in reasoning at all, it arguably would be of the refined and elaborate sort, since this is the kind that might enable its practitioner to attain fame and influence by exhibiting his or her genius and capacity.[33]

Even granting all this, however, Hume's rather singular justification of his recommitment to philosophy leaves at least two important questions open. The first concerns the scope of his future enquiries and the second the degree of confidence which he is entitled to place in their results. I shall deal briefly with each of these in the present section before turning to the question of the justification of the title principle in the next.

The scope problem arises because Hume had initially linked curiosity and ambition to reflections falling within the sphere of common life and he is acutely aware that this does not encompass everything that is generally regarded as pertaining to philosophy or, indeed, everything with which he has been concerned in Book 1 of the *Treatise*. Thus, assuming that curiosity and ambition alone might not suffice to motivate a concern for the more abstruse topics of philosophical

reflection, Hume introduces a supplemental and seemingly paradoxical justification, which is more pragmatic than hedonic. According to this new justification, it is our "very weakness" that leads us into such enquiries, by which he understands the fact that, "'tis almost impossible for the mind of man to rest, like those of beasts, in that narrow circle of objects, which are the subject of daily conversation and action" (T 1.4.7.13; SBN 271).[34] Since, given this feature of our psychological makeup a concern with these topics is virtually unavoidable, the question for Hume is the best means to adopt in pursuing them.[35] And since the only two options he recognizes are superstition and philosophy, Hume has no hesitancy in recommending the latter on the grounds that, "[g]enerally speaking, the errors in religion are dangerous; those in philosophy only ridiculous" (T 1.4.7.15; SBN 272).[36]

Hume turns to the second of the above-mentioned concerns, namely, the degree of confidence to place in his conclusions, in the final paragraph of the section. In addition to reaffirming his right to indulge his inclination to engage in "the most elaborate philosophical researches" (which presumably include those that go beyond the relatively safe sphere of common life), Hume there also claims a license to "yield to that propensity, which inclines us to be positive and certain in *particular points*, according to the light, in which we survey them in any *particular instant*" (T 1.4.7.15; SBN 273). With due apologies to Santayana, I shall term this stance a "dogmatism of the present moment."[37]

Hume's justification for this apparent lapse into a form of dogmatism turns on an implicit appeal to the title principle. The basic idea is a variant of the one underlying his skepticism in common life, namely, the relative difficulty of checking "so natural a propensity" to acquiesce to a belief "which always arises from an exact and full survey of an object" (T 1.4.7.15; SBN 274). Hume here suggests that the naturalness of the propensity to feel certain under these conditions and the consequent difficulty of resisting it allows him, at least for the moment, to suppress his underlying skeptical principles and to use terms such as "['t]is *evident*, *'tis certain*, *'tis undeniable*," even though he knows that, strictly speaking, they are never warranted.[38] Insofar as the reasoning being affirmed through such expressions is lively and mixed with some propensity, the title principle gives Hume a warrant to use them. But it is only a restricted warrant, lasting as long as the propensity remains in place. Thus, it licenses merely a dogmatism of the present moment, which is the only form of dogmatism appropriate for a "true sceptic."

IV

Assuming that the title principle provides Hume with a warrant for what I have termed his "dogmatism of the present moment" and, more generally, his philosophical insouciance, of which the former is a decisive expression, our final

question concerns Hume's grounds for relying upon it. Fortunately, even though the issues are quite complex, since most of the essential points have already been noted, it is possible to be relatively brief.

Simply put, the title principle expresses the norm implicit in our reliance upon our cognitive faculties. What is crucial here is that it is not an external norm introduced from without to justify this reliance, but one that is immanent in their very operation. Accordingly, since we are constrained to rely upon these faculties, in spite of what we have learned about their manifest imperfections, we are at the same time constrained to accept the title principle. This is a consequence of Hume's analysis of the operation of these faculties. As we have seen, this analysis revealed that we have a strong tendency to accept reasoning that is lively and mixes with some propensity and to reject reasoning that does not meet these criteria. Thus, to rely upon our cognitive faculties just is to apply these criteria, which is precisely what the title principle dictates that we should do.

If this, or something like it, reflects Hume's implicit reasoning in T 1.4.7, then his procedure is circular in a two-fold sense, though not viciously so. First, it is circular insofar as it assumes the soundness of his analysis of the cognitive faculties, which is itself presumably based upon reasoning governed by the title principle, in order to justify the latter. Second, it is circular because Hume's justification of his diffidence regarding doubts about the reliability of these faculties presupposes the validity of this principle. For while this diffidence stems largely from the psychological unsustainability of his doubts, it is only on the basis of the title principle that the psychological unsustainability of a doubt may be taken as a *justifying* reason to disregard that doubt and a strong propensity to believe as a *justifying* reason to believe. In other words, apart from the title principle, Hume could argue that, as a matter of psychological fact, he cannot sustain his doubts regarding the reliability of his cognitive faculties and, therefore, finds himself forced (in a psychological sense) to assume their reliability; but he would have no warrant to affirm this reliability.

Nevertheless, the circle is not vicious because in both cases it is a matter of the cognitive faculties approving of their own operations, insofar as they accord with the title principle and disapproving of them insofar as they do not, which obviously entails approving of the latter as well. Otherwise expressed, Hume's vindication of both the trustworthiness of the cognitive faculties and the title principle comes down to a kind of self-approval or "reflective endorsement" of the cognitive faculties by the cognitive faculties.[39] Although, once again, this hardly guarantees that these faculties are dependable, it is arguably sufficient for Hume's purposes, since it enables him to rely upon them, at least insofar as their operations conform to the title principle, which suffices to justify the insouciance on the basis of which alone he finds himself able to continue with his philosophical project.

Finally, in view of Hume's need to justify a reliance upon his cognitive faculties, it is perhaps noteworthy that he did not avail himself of a seemingly stronger anti-skeptical argument, which appears to be independent of the highly idiosyncratic nature of the title principle. This is an argument to the effect that a radical skepticism regarding the cognitive faculties, such as Descartes entertained with his malignant genius hypothesis, is self-defeating or incoherent rather than, as Hume seems to suggest, merely psychologically unsustainable.[40] Presumably, this stronger argument would be based upon the premise that since the doubts that Hume raises concerning the reliability of the cognitive faculties stem from his discoveries regarding their manner of operation, they presuppose the reliability of these very faculties, as that by means of which these discoveries were made. In other words, unless the overall reliability of these faculties is assumed, there is no basis for attaching any epistemic weight to these doubts. Conversely, if one does attach such weight to these doubts, then one must also assume the reliability of the faculties.

Although this might seem to be the natural response to the predicament in which Hume finds himself, it is easy to see why he does not make use of it. The problem lies in its similarity to the standard dogmatic response to the skeptic that Hume ridiculed in T 1.4.1. As noted previously, this familiar response maintains that the skeptic's attack on the authority of reason is self-defeating because the force of this attack is a function of the authority attached to the skeptic's reasoning. And, as we saw, Hume's retort consists in turning the anti-skeptical argument on its head. The dogmatist's victory over the skeptic by this means is merely pyrrhic, since such a skepticism only undermines or defeats itself by first undermining the authority of the reason upon which the dogmatist relies.

I suggest that the justification of his philosophical project that Hume provides in T 1.4.7 is intended to avoid this consequence. For whereas the dogmatic counter to the skeptic aims at vindicating the absolute authority of reason by depriving the skeptical challenge to this authority of any weight on the grounds that its arguments assume this authority, the Humean counter is much more modest and reflective of his philosophical insouciance. Rather than attempting to establish through argument the absolute authority of reason, Hume's intent is merely to justify a certain diffidence with respect to the doubts raised against the reliability of the cognitive faculties. And, in this context, Hume evidently thought it sufficient to underscore the unsustainability of any serious doubt of this reliability, particularly insofar as the unsustainability of such doubt is given a kind of normative force through the title principle. The recognition of the inherent imperfections of these faculties is the ground of Hume's diffidence regarding his philosophical conviction; while the recognition of the unsustainability of the doubts concerning their reliability in virtue of these imperfections is the ground of his diffidence regarding his philosophical doubts. As we have seen, together they constitute the two poles of Hume's "true scepticism."[41]

NOTES

1 All references to Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* will be to the edition by David F. and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), and the edition by L. A. Selby-Bigge, revised by P. H. Nidditch, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978). I shall refer to the *Treatise* parenthetically as "T" followed by book, part, section and paragraph numbers (as given in the Norton and Norton edition) and by "SBN and the page number (as given in the Selby-Bigge and Nidditch edition). References to Hume's *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* are to the edition by Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and to *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, revised by P. H. Nidditch, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). I shall refer to this work parenthetically as "EHU" followed by section and paragraph numbers (as given in the Beauchamp edition) and by "SBN" and the page number (as given in the Selby-Bigge and Nidditch edition). References to Hume's *An Enquiry to concerning the Principles of Morals* will be to the edition by Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) and to the above-mentioned Selby-Bigge and Nidditch edition of the *Enquiries*. I shall refer to the work parenthetically as "EPM" followed by the section and paragraph numbers (as given in the Beauchamp edition) and the page number (as given in the Selby-Bigge and Nidditch edition).

2 Annette Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's* Treatise (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 2.

3 Ibid.

4 This argument is also intended as a response to the reading of William Morris, who though differing markedly from Baier in his account of Hume's views, likewise denies that Hume is really calling into question his own commitment to reason, naturalistically understood. See Morris, "Hume's Conclusion," *Philosophical Studies* 99 (2000): 89–110, and "Humean Reason and the Problem of Warrant," *Hume Studies* 26 (2000): 305–21 (the latter delivered first as a contribution to a symposium on David Owen's *Hume's Reason*).

5 I am here in basic agreement with Ira Singer. See his "Hume's Extreme Skepticism in *Treatise* 1.4.7," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 25 (1995): 595–622, and "Nature Breaks Down: Hume's Problematic Naturalism in *Treatise* 1.4," *Hume Studies* 26 (2000): 225–43.

6 Don Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press), 234.

7 For a useful discussion of several versions of the non-skeptical interpretation in the recent literature, see Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment*, 83–95.

8 Ibid., 214 and passim. A very similar view has also been advanced by David Owen, *Hume's Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 123 and passim. For a detailed and sympathetic account of this line of interpretation, see also Harold W. Noonan, *Hume on Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1999), 119–31.

9 Among those who challenge this thesis, particularly in connection with Garrett's reading, are Peter Millican, "Hume on Reason and Induction: Epistemology or Cog-

nitive Science?" *Hume Studies* 24 (1998): 141–59, and more expansively in "Hume's Sceptical Doubts Concerning Induction," in *Reading Hume on Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Millican (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 107–73; Robert Fogelin, "Garrett on the Consistency of Hume's Philosophy," *Hume Studies* 24 (1998): 161–9; and Louis Loeb, *Stability and Justification in Hume's* Treatise (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

10 One such alternative is provided by Millican, *Reading Hume*, who combines a skeptical reading of the argument of T 1.3.6, assuming a Lockean (rather than a Cartesian) conception of reason, which Hume accepts, with the attribution to Hume of a non-skeptical *attitude to induction* in virtue of its grounding in custom. I am grateful to a reader for *Hume Studies* for reminding me of this feature of Millican's interpretation.

11 See Barry Stroud, "Hume's Skepticism: Natural Instincts and Philosophical Reflection," *Philosophical Topics* 19 (1991): 271–91, 274.

12 I am here in agreement with Owen, *Hume's Reason*, esp. 199–201. I differ from Owen, however, in emphasizing the skeptical implications of this analysis.

13 This is evidenced by the fact that Hume describes this propensity as operative in both science (the mathematician) and common life (the merchant). See T 1.4.1.2–3; SBN 180–1.

14 I am here taking the "rules of logic" as referring to Hume's "*[r]ules by which to judge of cause and effect*," which he says is "all the Logic I think proper to employ in my reasoning" (T 1.3.15.11; SBN 175).

15 It should be kept in mind that part 4 is entitled "Of the Sceptical and other Systems of Philosophy." The implication is that a "systematic" skepticism, such as classical Pyrrhonianism, is no more viable, albeit for quite different reasons, than any other philosophical system. Thus, Hume's philosophical carelessness or insouciance is reflected in his global rejection of systems, which seems to stand in some tension with his frequent references to his own "system" of this or that, not to mention the systematic project of the *Treatise* as a whole. I do not intend the latter remark as a criticism of Hume, however, since I believe that Hume was acutely conscious of the point and attempted to deal with it in T 1.4.7.

16 George Berkeley, *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, in *The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne*, vol. 2, ed. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (1949; London: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD, 1964), 2:28–47, §§ 9–15.

17 For a very different view of the matter, see Morris, "Hume's Conclusion," 96–102.

18 See Robert Fogelin, *Hume's Scepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 91. In discussing Hume's account of the modern philosophy, Fogelin there points out that for Hume the imagination can lead to skeptical results even when it is functioning properly.

19 Actually, the situation is even worse than Hume's account suggests, since in his analysis of the belief in the continued and distinct existence of body he had argued that causal explanation itself requires the assumption of continued existence (T 1.4.2.20; SBN 196). Thus, it seems that causal reasoning both presupposes and is incompatible

with the belief in continued existence. Baier notes this point (6), but she does not attach much significance to it with respect to Hume's own project.

20 This is to be contrasted with Baier's reading (8), which suggests that Hume is here concerned merely to indicate an implication of his theory of causality for theological reasoning, which, of course, would have no bearing on its implications for Hume's own, decidedly non-theological project.

21 See T 1.3.14.24 (SBN 167), where Hume famously compares this propensity of the mind with the projection onto objects of secondary qualities. For a discussion of Hume's projectionism, which is not limited to the idea of necessary connection, and some of the problems it involves, see Barry Stroud, "'Gilding or staining' the world with 'sentiments' and 'phantasms,'" *The New Hume Debate*, ed. Rupert Read and Kenneth A. Richman (London: Routledge, 2000), 16–30.

22 Owen, *Hume's Reason*, 203.

23 I am indebted to Don Garrett for helping to clarify this point for me in correspondence.

24 As is frequently the case, the contradiction would be of the pragmatic variety. Since the normative conclusion could be reached only by a bit of refined and elaborate reasoning, drawing it would show that the latter does have an effect on the mind after all. For a somewhat different reading of this contradiction, see Baier, *Progress of Sentiments*, 16.

25 The latter is the more or less standard reading, which identifies a "false reason" with one that adopts the maxim of rejecting all complex reasoning. See, for example, Owen, *Hume's Reason*, 203 and 203n13; and Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment*, 231. Although this reading is admittedly closer to the actual wording of the text, since Hume's lament that, "[w]e have, therefore, no choice left but betwixt a false reason and none at all" follows immediately upon his spelling out the alternatives of either adopting this maxim or "subverting entirely the human understanding," I nonetheless believe that my alternative reading is both compatible with the text and more in accord with the overall problematic confronting Hume at this juncture. If he is to continue his project, he must rely upon a reason that is "false" in the sense designated above. A similar reading of the terms of Hume's choice is suggested, albeit not explicitly developed, by Loeb, *Stability and Justification*, 30. By contrast, Baier, taking "false reason" in the standard way, equates it with "the prophetically Kantian understanding which uses forbidden reasoning to arrive at that very prohibition, which thinks beyond the limits of the understanding to discern these limits." Baier, *Progress of Sentiments*, 14. And, of course, on this reading, a "false reason" is not something on which Hume would be tempted to rely. But setting aside the highly tendentious manner in which Baier dismisses the Kantian critical project, I can find no warrant for attributing such a view to Hume. As far as I can see, limiting our cognition to the realm of possible experience has little or nothing to do with the maxim of rejecting all complex reasoning. The former concerns the scope of our cognition and the latter the kind of reasoning that is deemed permissible. Moreover, it seems rather obvious that Hume would have approved of the Kantian critical limitation, whereas he clearly rejects the maxim. Wayne Waxman, *Hume's Theory of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 280n1 raises similar objections to Baier's reading, but likewise construes "false reason" in the standard way.

26 The most elaborate treatment of this topic in the recent literature with which I am familiar is by Baier, *Progress of Sentiments*, 17–25. Unlike the present reading, however, she sees in Hume's account a series of changes in the narrator's self conception, which track the essential Humean transition from intellect to feeling.

27 Although the text is unclear and the chronological issue tricky, I believe that we must assume that, when engaged in these reflections, Hume was in a state of psychological limbo. On the one hand, he seems to be sufficiently in the clutches of spleen and indolence to express himself in an indolent manner and to lack any present inclination to return to philosophy. On the other hand, he must be at least partially liberated from this condition in order even to contemplate the conditions of a possible return. The title principle is, after all, a bit of metaphilosophy. The latter is one of the central points on which I believe my reading differs from Garrett's. (See note 30).

28 Hume's position has been characterized as involving a kind of metaskepticism by others, most notably by Wade Robison, "David Hume: Naturalist and Meta-sceptic," in *Hume: A Re-Evaluation*, ed. Donald W. Livingston and James T. King (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976), 23–49. But Robison understands by Hume's metaskepticism what I take to be his naturalism, namely, his appeal to the natural operations of the understanding to explain why we make judgments that are "unreasonable" according to empiricist principles. By contrast, I understand Hume's metaskepticism as consisting largely in his "diffidence" regarding the doubts generated by his analysis of the understanding.

29 According to Hume, "all the rules of logic require a continual diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence" (T 1.4.1.6; SBN 183). I take the rules of logic to which Hume alludes here to be the fore-mentioned rules of causal reasoning.

30 For example, the "logic" of the argument of T 1.4.2, as Hume constructs it, seems to lead to the denial of the continued and independent existence of our perceptions, that is, to something like Berkeley's phenomenalism, which (without mentioning Berkeley by name) Hume dismisses as a doctrine "peculiar to a few extravagant sceptics; who after all maintain'd that opinion in words only, and were never able to bring themselves sincerely to believe it" (T 1.4.2.50; SBN 214).

31 This is to be compared with the analysis of the title principle provided by Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment*, 234–7. Although there is considerable overlap between our readings, I believe that we differ on at least three points: 1) He claims that this principle replaces the discarded maxim to reject all refined and elaborate reasoning, whereas I contend that it serves as the maxim governing a "false reason" or, what amounts to the same thing, the reasoning of someone who (like Hume) purports to philosophize on skeptical principles. This is a direct consequence of our different readings of the outcome of the "dangerous dilemma" discussed above. 2) He suggests that this principle flows naturally from the sentiments of spleen and indolence, whereas I have questioned this on the grounds noted above. (See note 26.) 3) Largely on the basis of the preceding point, Garrett maintains that the title principle only attains its full justification through Hume's subsequent appeal to curiosity and ambition, which provide the psychological conditions under which it is endorsed. By contrast, I maintain that the appeal to curiosity and ambition (to be discussed below) has nothing to do with the justification of the title principle itself, which is already in place as the principle under which alone philosophizing is henceforth possible, but concerns rather the further question

regarding the reasons to philosophize at all. Finally, I wish once again to express my gratitude to Garrett for his very helpful comments on our differences as I expressed them in an earlier version of this paper. This is not to suggest, however, that I assume that he would endorse this later account.

32 According to Hume, a second requisite for awakening our curiosity is that the truth be of some importance (T 2.3.10.3; SBN 449). But, as he goes on to point out, the importance of the truth serves mainly to draw our attention to it and the satisfaction lies chiefly in the exercise of our faculties required for its discovery.

33 Admittedly, however, this conclusion seems to conflict with Hume's remark in the first *Enquiry*, where in distinguishing between the "easy and obvious" and the "abstruse" philosophy, he notes that the former has acquired "the most durable as well as the justest fame." And, in the same context he writes notoriously: "The fame of Cicero flourishes at present; but that of Aristotle is utterly decayed. La Bruyere passes the seas, and still maintains his reputation: But the glory of Malebranche is confined to his own nation, and to his own age. And Addison, perhaps, will be read with pleasure, when Locke shall be entirely forgotten" (EHU 1.4; SBN 7). In this context, it might also be noted that Hume published the *Treatise* anonymously; hardly the ideal way to attain fame through a contribution to philosophy!

34 At the very least, this stands in a certain tension with T 1.3.16 ("*Of the reason of animals*"), where Hume emphasizes the great resemblance between the reasoning processes of humans and animals.

35 It must be noted that Hume says that it is "*almost* impossible" (my emphasis) to avoid a concern with these matters; while in the very next paragraph he refers, with apparent approval, to the "many honest gentlemen, who being always employ'd in their domestic affairs, or amusing themselves in common recreations, have carry'd their thoughts very little beyond those objects, which are every day expos'd to their senses" (T 1.4.7.14; SBN 272). And, of course, Hume himself had no taste for philosophical reflections of any kind while in the grip of the sentiments of spleen and indolence.

36 Here, as he frequently does, Hume equates religion with superstition. Presumably, he says that the errors of philosophy are "generally speaking" (rather than always) ridiculous because he had referred in the preceding sentence to the Cynics as the great exception to his generalization that philosophers are genuinely guided by "mild and moderate sentiments," which prevent them from causing very much trouble, albeit not from committing ridiculous errors.

37 In *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, Santayana used the phrase "solipsism of the present moment" to characterize the hypothetical situation of a complete skeptic. According to Santayana, such a skepticism, were it possible, would be reduced to a mute staring at any datum or "essence" that might happen to pass before consciousness, without any interpretation or belief. See Philip Blair Rice, introduction to selection on Santayana in *Classic American Philosophers*, ed. Sterling Lambrecht (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951), 261. The Humean view, which I have dubbed "dogmatism of the present moment," is a virtual mirror image of this; though it also differs from Santayana's conception in referring to a psychological reality rather than a kind of limiting case.

38 A notable, albeit ironical, illustration of Hume's use of this line of thought is to be found in his discussion of virtue or personal merit in the second *Enquiry*. Hume there

remarks that he "cannot, *at present*, be more assured of any truth, which I learn from reasoning and argument, than that personal merit consists entirely in the usefulness or agreeableness of qualities to the person himself possessed of them, or to others, who have any intercourse with him"; but he then proceeds to add that, when he reflects on the continued disagreement concerning the foundation of morals, he falls back "into diffidence and scepticism, and suspect[s] that an hypothesis so obvious, had it been a true one, would long ere now, have been received by the unanimous suffrage and consent of mankind" (EPM 9.13; SBN 278).

39 Reflective endorsement interpretations of Hume seem to have become popular recently, though they differ significantly both from each other and from the one offered here. For example, Baier appeals to a reflective notion, namely, Hume's suggestion that the mind of someone who neglects the social virtues "will never be able to bear its own survey" (T 3.3.6.6; SBN 620), as a key to her analysis of Hume as a "reflective naturalist." See Baier, *Progress of Sentiments*, 96 and passim. As already suggested, however, her analysis lacks the dialectical tension that I view as central to Hume's account. By contrast, Christine Korsgaard, who uses the expression "reflective endorsement" to characterize a justificatory procedure in which a faculty takes itself for its own object, argues that, though for Hume the moral sense passes this test in the sense that it approves of its own verdicts, the understanding fails it, since, when it reflects on its own operations, it finds that it subverts itself. See *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 62–3. But this is to conflate Hume's preliminary reflection in T 1.4.1 with his final one in T 1.4.7. Moreover, if Korsgaard's reading were correct, Hume would not have been in a position to write Books 2 and 3 of the *Treatise* and, therefore, could not have developed his theory of moral sense. Closer to home, Garrett likewise suggests a kind of self-approval or reflective endorsement reading of Hume's vindication of the title principle. See Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment*, 234–5. If I understand him correctly, however, it differs from the one offered here in that it gives a significant role in this vindication to the sentiments of curiosity and ambition. As noted previously (see note 30), on my reading, the sentiments are crucial for motivating Hume's return to philosophy, but they play no role in the determination or vindication of the principle on the basis of which he would philosophize, should he choose to do so. Finally, Loeb, who argues for what he terms a "stability-based" interpretation, according to which beliefs are justified on the basis of their stability or persistence under reflection, rather than a "*reflexive approval*" interpretation, such as is offered by Baier and Korsgaard, admits an affinity between a certain version of the former and the latter. But he also insists that the "less demanding" version of the former, which he favors, according to which beliefs are justified relatively to the level of reflection of a given person rather than relatively to one who is fully reflective (which makes it possible for an unreflective person to hold justified beliefs, even though these beliefs would not survive self-scrutiny or reflection), "is not an instance of a reflexive approval view." See Loeb, *Stability and Justification*, 26–7. Loeb is undoubtedly correct on the latter score; but I question its relevance to the argument of T 1.4.7. As I have argued, Hume's concern is with the possibility of continuing to rely on his cognitive faculties, in light of what *reflection* has taught him about their imperfections. Thus, if a stability-based interpretation is to be applied here, it had better be of the stronger or more demanding sort, which Loeb admits would be a version of the reflexive approval approach.

40 Something closer to the latter approach is suggested in the *Enquiry*, where Hume describes the radical Cartesian doubt regarding the reliability of the cognitive faculties as a species of "antecedent scepticism." In addition to calling attention to the psychological impossibility of attaining or sustaining such a doubt, Hume remarks that if (*per impossibile*) such a doubt could be attained by a human being, it "would be entirely incurable; and no reasoning could ever bring us to a state of assurance and conviction upon any subject" (EHU 12.3; SBN 149–50). This at least gestures towards a claim of conceptual incoherence reminiscent of the famous "Cartesian circle" objection. This line of thought, however, seems to be totally absent from the *Treatise*. Moreover, Hume's doubts about the reliability of the cognitive faculties in that work is (unlike Descartes's) obviously a species of "consequent scepticism."

41 Although I cannot pursue the matter here, it is noteworthy that the response to a radical skepticism regarding the reliability of the cognitive faculties, which I here attribute to Hume, is quite similar to the one developed in response to the Cartesian version of such skepticism by Thomas Reid in his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, essay 6, chap. 5, section 7. In Reid, *Philosophical Works*, vol. 1, ed. Sir William Hamilton (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Veragsbuchhandlung 1967), 1:447–8. According to Reid, the proposition "*[t]hat the natural faculties, by which we distinguish truth from error, are not fallacious*," is a first principle, which, as such, is implanted in us by nature. Reid admits that, like all first principles, it is not demonstrable, but he denies that it requires demonstration. This is not because it is self-evident or indubitable in the Cartesian sense, however, but because the reliability of our faculties must be taken for granted in all our reasoning, including the skeptical reasoning through which their reliability is called into question. Moreover, inasmuch as he does not attribute self-evidence to the principle, Reid does not deny the possibility of doubting the veracity of our cognitive powers, but merely of maintaining such a doubt ("a real belief of their being fallacious") for any considerable period of time. Thus, like Hume, he regards any such doubt as unsustainable rather than as incoherent, a point which he makes by comparing it to a man walking upon his hands, "a feat," he notes, "which some men upon occasion can exhibit; but no man ever made a long journey in this manner." To be sure, in view of his commitment to the principles of common sense, Reid does not share Hume's diffidence regarding his philosophical conviction, which indicates that he could hardly be characterized as a "true sceptic" in Hume's sense. Nevertheless, if my reading of T 1.4.7 is correct, Reid's way of dealing with a skepticism directed against the reliability of the cognitive faculties is closer to that of his great predecessor than he might have thought.