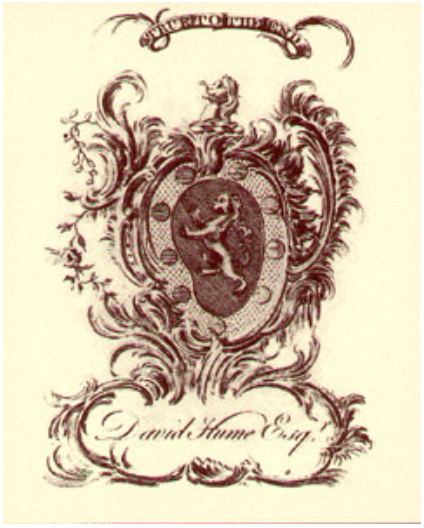

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Abstract: The extreme skepticism that Hume's dangerous dilemma introduces at the end of the first Book of the *Treatise* is deeply unsettling, in part because it seems to undermine Hume's commitments to common life and philosophy, but also because Hume seems not to take its sweeping doubts seriously. He refuses to abandon his daily activities and philosophical pursuits, and he offers no clear account of what entitles him to sustain them. This paper explores a variety of tactics for addressing these opposing elements of his thought. The most radical approach has Hume endorse nothing whatsoever in the *Treatise*, a maneuver that prevents any conflict between his doubts and his commitments from arising, though at a tremendous cost. A more charitable strategy allows Hume to speak with one consistent voice throughout the text by rejecting, repurposing, or restricting either his doubts or his commitments in a way that resolves the tension between them. Yet a third approach takes Hume to advance incompatible and irreconcilable positions but holds that the inconsistency in his thinking is not as destructive as it initially appears. None of the most promising ways of developing these proposals eliminates or satisfactorily eases the conflict in Hume's work, and the enormous obstacles that they face give us little reason to hope for something better.

At the end of Book 1 of the *Treatise*,[1] Hume encounters a radical skepticism that seems to undermine both his philosophical ambitions and his daily activities,

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yet he refuses to relinquish either. Although he offers no clear account of how to handle the tension between his doubts and his commitments to philosophy and common life, many strategies for defusing it seem available to him. This paper explores a variety of these tactics. I argue that although many proposals for resolving or at least easing the conflict initially can seem attractive, none is effective, and the difficulties that they face are so extensive that we would be unwise to suppose that a more satisfying solution can be found. Since appreciating the depth of the tension in Hume's thought requires some understanding of his extreme skepticism, I begin by reviewing the "very dangerous dilemma" that generates his doubts (T 1.4.7.6; SBN 267).

Hume finds many grounds for disappointment when he reviews his investigation of the mind in "Conclusion of This Book," but his gravest misgivings stem from a dilemma that forces him to choose between the imagination's "trivial suggestions" and the mind's "general and more establish'd properties" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 267). The former, which emphasize contiguity and resemblance, exert only weak or unsteady influence yet still manage to produce contrary beliefs and support "such errors, absurdities, and obscurities" as to make us "asham'd of our credulity" (T 1.4.7.6; SBN 267). Hume blames them for our tendency to accept others' testimony too easily, for the zealotry of religious pilgrims, and for the philosophers' fictions of substance, substantial forms, and occult qualities, as well as the notion that we can identify causal relationships without recourse to past experience (for example, T 1.3.9, 1.4.3; SBN 106ff, 219ff). The more established principles of the mind, which appear in demonstrative reasoning and probability estimates, look equally insupportable, since "the understanding, when it acts alone, entirely subverts itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 267).

The mind's propensity to destroy itself first attracts Hume's attention much earlier in the *Treatise*, when he explores skepticism regarding reason (T 1.4.1; SBN 180ff). He explains that appreciating our fallibility as reasoners should lead us to correct any judgment by a second assessment, but that, since this subsequent assessment will also be fallible, we must correct it by a further judgment, which will need to be evaluated, and so on. This process reduces knowledge to probability, and probability to nothing, so that our beliefs must eventually evaporate. In his initial discussion, Hume is content to note that the understanding does not in fact sabotage itself, for the "subtile" reasoning needed for self-annihilation to occur is so "forc'd and unnatural" that we cannot sustain it (T 1.4.10–11; SBN 185–86). He additionally insists that he is not a skeptic, or a least not a "total" one (T 1.4.7; SBN 183), because nature forces him to reason and believe.[2] When Hume revisits the problem at the end of Book 1, however, he emphasizes that only a "trivial" property of the fancy prevents reason from undermining itself, and he acknowledges that this property does not preserve reason's authority. Rather than dismiss

the understanding's tendency to extinguish itself on the grounds that we cannot easily engage in the reasoning that causes this destruction, he confesses that he "knows not what *ought* to be done" and can only report on what we generally do: we soon forget the matter, and it "leaves but a small impression," for "[v]ery refin'd reflections have little or no influence upon us" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 268, emphasis added). Hume thus distinguishes a satisfactory solution to his skeptical problem from our actual response to it, and he finds our response wanting. Our tendency to continue to reason and believe does not change the fact that reason's operations fail to survive critical scrutiny.

We might think that Hume could prevent the understanding from obliterating itself simply by adopting a maxim that prohibits refined or elaborate reasoning, but Hume anticipates and repudiates this move. He reminds us that the principle would effectively eliminate all science and philosophy, and he stresses that we could have no adequate basis for accepting it anyway. We would contradict ourselves if we advanced an argument for the maxim, since we then would employ the kind of reasoning that the rule prohibits, and if we offered no justification whatsoever for the principle, our acceptance of it would be utterly capricious. Hume concludes that we must choose between a false, arbitrarily constrained, self-contradictory reason and no reason at all.[3]

The dangerous dilemma thus seems to make philosophy and engagement in common life impossible, and after encountering it, Hume tells us that he stands "ready to reject all belief . . . , and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another" (T 1.4.7.8; SBN 268–69). Yet he quickly returns to his former activities, and he offers no satisfying explanation of what entitles him to carry on. He seems content merely to describe how his melancholy dissipates, for he reports that nature "relaxes" his mind (T 1.4.7.9; SBN 269) and induces an indolent state in which he dines and amuses himself with friends (T 1.4.7.12; SBN 270), until these activities grow wearisome and he finds himself "naturally *inclin'd*" to return to philosophy as a diffident "true sceptic" (T 1.4.7.14; SBN 273). Hume's sketch of his shifting frame of mind illuminates the kinds of occupations that he enjoys in different humors, but it neither supplies a clear account of what licenses his pursuits nor gives us any reason to think that his dilemma has ceased to be dangerous. Acknowledging the fact that nature forces him to reason and believe is not an adequate response to the problem, for his inability to avoid having beliefs does not settle the question of whether these beliefs are epistemically warranted, a point that he acknowledges.

Despite the absence of any clear and straightforward story of what permits Hume to reject his extreme skepticism, many avenues seem open to him for dismissing his doubts, or at least easing the conflict between them and his commitments to everyday life and philosophy. These different options, though numerous, employ three basic sorts of strategies. First, Hume might refrain from endorsing anything

in the *Treatise*. This *No-Hume* maneuver allows him to handle the (supposed) tension in his thought by preventing it from arising in the first place. Second, Hume might adopt an approach that allows him to speak with one voice throughout the *Treatise* by rejecting, repurposing, or restricting either his doubts or his commitments. The simplest of these Single-Hume stratagems resembles No-Hume devices insofar as it too prevents the (alleged) conflict in Hume's thinking from ever emerging, though it does so by having him reject only one of the parties to it. Hume might favor a thoroughgoing radical skepticism that never takes the naturalistic elements of the *Treatise* seriously, for example, or he might endorse a complete naturalism and display a comparably dismissive attitude to the text's skeptical elements. A variation on the latter approach authorizes Hume to reject his radical skepticism on the grounds that the argument that generates it is self-defeating and therefore need not be taken seriously. Such simple Single-Hume maneuvers shade into more complex Single-Hume tactics that allow Hume to place greater weight on both the skeptical and nonskeptical elements of his work, but that attempt to dissolve the resulting tension in a way that still licenses him to talk with a single consistent voice. Hume might treat either his doubts or his commitments in a purely instrumentalist fashion, for instance, and so advance one of them solely in the service of the other. But he might instead claim that the scope of his extreme doubts is limited to particular sorts of reasoning or beliefs and hence that his doubts, when properly understood, do not affect philosophy or common life. The third basic approach that Hume could employ to address the conflict in his thinking is to acknowledge that he speaks with multiple voices, as a result of adopting diverse and conflicting positions, but to maintain that the tension between them is less damaging than it initially seems. One *Several-Humes* approach that Hume might endorse is a perspectival tactic that enables him to move back and forth between irreconcilable viewpoints depending on his mood or interests, yet facilitates occupying a stance for an extended period of time and talking with a single voice while in it. Alternatively, Hume could favor a developmental strategy that allows him to shift his positions as he learns more about the mind and as his understanding of human nature evolves.[4]

Both the simplest versions of Single-Hume strategies and the No-Hume approaches face monumental obstacles. Insisting that Hume flatly disregard all but the radically skeptical elements of his work, while maintaining that the rest of the *Treatise* is either ironical, serves some literary purpose, or merely reports on (but does not advance) a passing mood or perspective fails to place adequate value on Hume's stated ambition to establish a science of human nature, the discoveries that he claims to make about the mind, his eventual adoption of a moderate or "true" skepticism, and the fact that the *Treatise* does not end with Book 1.[5] Proposing that Hume takes no real interest in anything but the text's naturalistic elements and holding that he is nothing but a scientist who cares only about

how we come to believe what we do (and not in whether our beliefs are justified) places insufficient weight on his many skeptical arguments—some of which seem to undermine his science of human nature—and on the despair he experiences after encountering his dilemma. No-Hume views inherit the defects of both sorts of proposals. Whether any of Hume's readers advance such flat-footed skeptical or naturalist interpretations is doubtful, though J. H. Randall, Jr. shows sympathy for a No-Hume approach when he describes Hume as "wholly uninterested in building up a consistent position . . . or a method and conclusions of his own" and portrays him instead as concerned only with "commenting on the methods and conclusions of others."[6]

A more tempting route for addressing the conflict between Hume's radical skepticism and his commitments to philosophy and common life urges that his skepticism need not be taken seriously because the argument that generates it is self-defeating: The dangerous dilemma employs the mind's general and more established principles to show that the mind's general and more established principles are untrustworthy, and this is confused. Anyone who is tempted by the argument's conclusion should be intensely suspicious of the reasoning that supports it, while anyone who fully endorses the argument's reasoning should doubt its conclusion.[7]

Hume shows some interest in this line of criticism when he rejects the maxim "Avoid all refined reasoning" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 268) on the grounds that our only justification for accepting it involves the kind of reasoning that it officially prohibits. To accept the rule on this basis, he admonishes us, is to "expressly contradict" ourselves (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 268). Still, he does not adopt such a strategy when he deals with his dilemma. After he discovers that he has "no choice left but betwixt a false reason and none at all," he instead tells us that he "know[s] not what ought to be done" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 268). When he describes his response to the argument, moreover, he focuses on nature's power to "cure" his "philosophical melancholy and delirium" (T 1.4.7.9; SBN 269); he never so much as hints that the dilemma is confused or incoherent. Perhaps most importantly, Hume finds nothing useful to be gained from the fact that skeptical arguments may destroy themselves. When he initially discusses reason's tendency to subvert itself in part 4 of Book 1, he explores the objection that skeptical arguments can be dismissed because they undermine themselves, and he tells us that this destruction can occur only after the arguments have "first subverted all conviction, and have totally destroy'd human reason," in which case extreme skepticism triumphs (T 1.4.1.12; SBN 187). As Hume sees it, when reason destroys itself, nothing survives.[8]

A somewhat more modest version of the idea that the dangerous dilemma is self-defeating maintains that once we recognize that the dilemma's doubts extend to its own grounds, we are warranted in resisting their *full* force because we realize that our fallible faculties produced them and hence that we could be mistaken.

According to this proposal, the appropriate response to the dilemma lies in adopting the kind of moderate, or "true," skepticism (T 1.4.7.14; SBN 274) that Hume ultimately defends, a stance in which we approach philosophy in a carefree fashion that involves diffidence about both our doubts and our convictions. Don Garrett advances this sort of account when he tells us that "if human reason judges itself to be imperfect, then reason itself tells us that we must discount to some extent the very skepticism to which it leads us."[9] Paul Russell also favors such a proposal when he asserts that "although philosophical reflection may *momentarily* 'disturb' our willingness to reason and believe, *further reflection* will bring us to doubt our own doubts—thereby returning us to a more moderate academic skepticism."[10]

There are two reasons to resist this suggestion. First, Hume's extreme doubts prevent reflecting on the dilemma or the mind's operations in the way that the account requires, and the doubts make formulating a plan of action just as problematic. Recognizing that the dilemma's conclusions apply to its own reasoning and determining on this basis to become a more moderate skeptic requires employing principles of the mind that the dilemma undercuts, and thus presupposes some sort of warrant for overriding the pervasive doubts that the argument generates. Second, Hume's refusal to allow that arguments that undermine themselves thereby provide us with a reason for discarding them makes this proposal unpalatable.

A twist on self-defeatist approaches is suggested by Donald Ainslie, who proposes that the kind of reflection that the dilemma requires interferes with and distorts the mind's operations, since reason disintegrates when examined too closely, and that as a result, the skeptic who wants to attack its verdicts "merely causes confusion within himself."[11] The problem is not simply the psychological impossibility of correcting every judgment by a further judgment but that such attempts at correction undercut reason's authority. Since this authority results from vivacious, associatively produced conclusions, correcting each judgment by another makes generating relevant associations and reaching conclusions increasingly difficult, with the result that the conclusions themselves possess less legitimacy. Once we recognize that Hume never seriously questions the reliability of certain principles of the imagination, and that he only doubts our ability to examine them as closely as we would like, we see that his dilemma poses no threat to his other interests and commitments. Hume's argument does not show that the mind's established principles are untrustworthy; it only causes momentary bewilderment.

Textual support for this proposal can be found, first, in Hume's observation that repeated re-examination of our earlier judgments makes the mind's action "forc'd and unnatural, and the ideas faint and obscure" (T 1.4.1.10; SBN 185) and, second, in Hume's assertion that "[w]here the mind reaches not its objects with easiness and facility, the same principles have not the same effect as in a more

natural conception of ideas" (T 1.4.1.10; SBN 185). But the account is not without difficulties, for although Hume begins the *Treatise* with provisional faith in the trustworthiness of the mind's general, established principles, he eventually must consider how far his confidence is justified. He begins this task in part 4 of Book 1, when first considering reason's tendency to self-subversion, and his examination culminates when he addresses the dangerous dilemma at the Book's end. The reading that Ainslie offers has Hume failing to take the job seriously, which not only fits poorly with Hume's interests in Book 4 but is also at odds with the dismay that Hume expresses after confronting the dilemma. Further, even if Hume does not regard the dilemma as a threat, he still needs to supply a convincing account of what allows him to dismiss it, since the argument at least seems to jeopardize his philosophical activity and other pursuits. Ainslie's suggestion also invites a skepticism that seems comparably pernicious: If we recognize that our fallibility as reasoners should make us correct any judgment by another, which we know will also need correction, and we realize that we cannot perform these operations without confusing ourselves, then confidence in our initial belief ought to erode. The same seemingly trivial properties of the imagination will no doubt leave us believing and reasoning, but radical doubts will remain a serious problem.

Each of the Single-Humes strategies so far considered—that is, the proposal that Hume accepts a thorough-going radical skepticism, the suggestion that he adopts a complete naturalism, and the idea that his dangerous dilemma is self-defeating—attempts to address the conflict between his doubts and his commitments by denying either the doubts or the commitments. The difficulties that these attempts face indicate that maneuvers of this sort do not succeed. A more auspicious tactic acknowledges both the skeptical and nonskeptical elements of the *Treatise* in a way that gives considerable significance to each, and then looks for some way of resolving the tension between them. More complex Single-Hume approaches take this tack. Instrumentalist accounts, for example, maintain that Hume repurposes one of the seemingly incompatible elements in his thinking so that it functions solely to support the other component. Dugald Stewart advances a radically skeptical version of such instrumentalism when he proposes that Hume wants "to establish a universal scepticism, and to produce in the reader a complete distrust in his own faculties," and that "[f]or this purpose, he avails himself of the data assumed by the most opposite sects, shifting his ground skillfully from one position to another, as best suits the scope of his present argument."[12] Norman Kemp Smith favors a naturalistic counterpart to Stewart's proposal when he asserts that Hume advances "a two-fold philosophical discipline—a sceptical discipline to open [our] eyes to the deceptiveness of the mistaken endeavours, both moral and speculative, into which [our] specifically human powers are ever tending to betray [us], and a positive naturalistic philosophy to mark out the paths upon which [we] can confidently travel without any such attempted violation of [our] human

nature, and in furtherance of its essential needs."[13] Hume's skepticism, Kemp Smith explains, "serves as an ally, but in due subordination, not as an equal" (132).

Although the value that both sorts of instrumentalist devices place on the opposing elements in Hume's thought makes them appealing, neither sort of tactic satisfyingly resolves the tension in his thinking. Radically skeptical instrumentalist approaches are untenable, since even if Hume is some sort of skeptic when he begins the *Treatise*, the notion that his skepticism is extreme, and that the proposals and arguments that populate his text are just materials that he manipulates to support his position, is wildly implausible. Profound, pervasive doubts would preclude any inquiry whatsoever, and Hume opens the *Treatise* by announcing not only that he is developing a science of human nature but also that this science will provide "the only solid foundation for the other sciences" (T Intro 7; SBN xvi). He then exerts considerable effort to discover and explain how the mind operates. An extreme skeptic could not embark on this sort of enterprise, and so insisting that Hume's activities are designed solely to establish radical skepticism distorts much that goes on in Book 1. Also, the proposal cannot accommodate the fact that Hume's dilemma does not lead him to renounce his science, abandon his attempt to "contribute a little to the advancement of knowledge" (T 1.4.7.14; SBN 273), and forgo writing Books 2 and 3. Naturalist versions of instrumentalism, which say that Hume advances extreme skepticism in the service of his science, do not inflict the same degree of violence on his text. The challenge they face involves explaining what entitles Hume to use radical skepticism, and the dangerous dilemma in particular, as instruments, for to propose that he so deploys them is not yet to reveal what allows him to treat them in this fashion, or to indicate why he can discount the skepticism and uphold his naturalism. If an account of what justifies Hume's behavior is supplied, however, *it* will do the work of legitimizing his actions, which means that bare naturalist instrumentalist approaches are at best incomplete and must be supplemented, presumably along the lines of one of the other stratagems for resolving the conflict in Hume's thought. The mere fact that Hume treats extreme skepticism as an instrument does not in itself explain why he can dispense with its sweeping doubts.

Yet another Single-Hume strategy for easing the conflict between Hume's skepticism and his commitments to common life and philosophy holds that his doubts apply only to specific sorts of reasoning and belief. A natural way of developing this idea traces the tension in Hume's thought to his employment of distinct, but ultimately reconcilable, epistemic standards and urges that radical skepticism originates from especially strict norms that do not apply to daily living or philosophical activity. According to this proposal, once these exacting standards are restricted to their proper place, the conflict between Hume's doubts and his commitments dissipates. Hume can study human nature and engage in a range of other activities even though his doubts remain (in a sense) unanswerable, for

his skepticism stems from norms that are simply inappropriate in these contexts, and as a result, Hume can ignore it.

This suggestion can be developed by maintaining that Hume's skepticism springs from a demand for certainty and that his doubts are unanswerable merely in the sense that they cannot be resolved with the level of assurance that certainty requires. Paul Russell suggests such an approach when he remarks, "if we are looking for secure philosophical foundations for the project of the 'science of man,' immune from *any* skeptical doubts, then Hume must agree with his critic that this cannot be done" (221, emphasis added). Donald Ainslie shows some sympathy for this kind of account when he observes that "a wholly unimpeachable" answer to extreme skepticism is not forthcoming because "our reasoning is always fallible" (263). Proposals of this sort gain plausibility from Hume's increasingly cautious attitude towards claims of certainty as he gradually learns more about how the mind works. Early in the *Treatise*, Hume expresses certainty about a number of things, including, for example, the idea that time is composed of indivisible moments (T 1.2.2.4; SBN 31) and the view that our idea of extension is nothing but a copy of colored points arranged in a particular manner (T 1.2.3.4; SBN 34). By the beginning of part 4, he is more guarded, for he reports that while the rules in the demonstrative sciences are "certain and infallible," our *application* of them is prone to "fall into error," and he observes that reason has the potential to subvert itself (T 1.4.1.1; SBN 180). He concludes Book 1 on an especially circumspect note, blaming a "natural propensity" for "inclining" us to say that we are certain and admonishing us to understand such pronouncements "according to the light, in which we survey them in any *particular instant*" (T 1.4.7.15; SBN 273–74). Because Hume counsels us to adopt a dismissive attitude toward claims of certainty only after he encounters his dangerous dilemma, the idea that he traces his extreme skepticism to a demand for certainty has some plausibility, and since Hume indicates that we should not expect certainty in either philosophy or daily life, the suggestion that philosophical activities and common life pursuits are insulated from his radical doubts is credible, too.

On the whole, however, the suggestion that Hume's extreme skepticism stems from a demand for certainty, and that the conflict in his thought can be eased by severing this demand from philosophy and everyday life, is unattractive. Part of the problem with the proposal is that it inappropriately downgrades Hume's interest in probable reasoning. Hume advertises the *Treatise* as an attempt an attempt to rectify a "defect" that other studies of logic possess, namely, that they are "too concise when they treat of probabilities, and those other measures of evidence on which life and action intirely depend, and which are our guides even in most of our philosophical speculations" (T Abstract 4; SBN 646–47). Hume attempts to reduce almost all reasoning to experience, and he argues that our beliefs are largely the product of custom or habit. He also conceives of the science of human nature as an

empirical enterprise that focuses on matters of fact rather than relations of ideas and demonstrations, and he indicates that only the latter are capable of certainty (T 1.3.11.2; SBN 124). He consequently cannot seriously expect to discover much, if anything, that is truly certain in his science of man. A radical skepticism driven by a demand for certainty, therefore, would pose little threat to his work.

A related difficulty with the idea that an insistence on certainty generates Hume's extreme skepticism is that this account of his skepticism makes the delirium and melancholy that he experiences when he encounters his dangerous dilemma bizarre. If the dilemma establishes only the impossibility of certainty, then since Hume's science does not aspire to certainty, the dilemma should not reduce him to despair. The fact that he does undergo profound anguish suggests that the roots of his skepticism lie elsewhere, and a review of the dilemma confirms that the doubts do spring from a different source. The dilemma both condemns the imagination's trivial properties for producing "such errors, absurdities, and obscurities, that we must at last become asham'd of our credulity" and denounces the mind's more general and established properties on the grounds that when they act alone, they "leave . . . not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition" (T 1.4.7.6–7; SBN 267). In neither case does the argument focus on certainty.[14]

An alternative version of the multiple epistemic standards stratagem agrees that Hume's extreme skepticism is not provoked by a demand for certainty but holds that exacting standards are nonetheless to blame for his radical doubts. Kenneth Winkler arguably has something like this in mind when he distinguishes "foundational philosophy," with its standard of "reasonableness relative to the desire for foundations known to be free of fallacy," from common life, which adopts norms that support inductively grounded rules that we may deliberately employ.[15] Although Winkler does not specify the standards associated with foundational philosophy, he considers those that attend daily life in some detail and proposes that they result from a process of "*normalizing of the natural*" (204). We first accept nature's uniformity, later become aware of our commitment to this uniformity, and eventually discover that our commitment is conjoined with practical success. Once we see that the commitment is a *cause* of our success, we come to approve of the commitment, and after we recognize that people vary in their ability to make use of the past, we can articulate inductively grounded rules for judging causes and effects. Nature and human nature thus work together to make some of our beliefs norms that we can recognize, contemplate, and even improve, and that would presumably make a science of human nature possible. While our radical doubts "persist" because they attach to a different standard of reasonableness, they are "naturally insulated" from everyday life since nature forces us to reason and believe (204–205). Winkler maintains that this isolation is not complete, for the norms associated with extreme skepticism influence those found with common life by shaping the true or mitigated skepticism that Hume

ultimately endorses. But Winkler regards the isolation as adequate and indicates that it allows Hume to speak with one voice, since Hume can acknowledge, from the standpoint of everyday life and its norms of reasonableness, the standard that generates radical skepticism.

This sort of strategy for resolving the conflict in Hume's thought is intuitively plausible, for we often adopt different epistemic standards depending on our varying needs and interests, and we recognize that the more stringent ones, required in some contexts, are completely inappropriate in other settings. The norms that we employ when, say, working in a laboratory or serving on a jury are generally more exacting than those that we invoke when judging whether a lawn needs mowing or a car is clean, and we confine the more rigorous standards to their proper sphere. The idea that Hume similarly distinguishes two different standards of belief and that his extreme skepticism attaches to only one of these is therefore appealing. But approaches of this general type cannot ease the tension in Hume's thought for the same reason that accounts that attribute Hume's skepticism to a demand for certainty falter: the dangerous dilemma does not emphasize excessively stringent epistemic standards; it criticizes the imagination for producing errors that should make us ashamed of ourselves, and it condemns the understanding for robbing us of any evidence for accepting anything.

Winkler's specific version of this approach faces an additional difficulty. Although Winkler proposes that Hume's doubts are "naturally insulated" (204) from his commitments, appealing to such insulation to explain why Hume is licensed to dismiss his skepticism does not work. That nature often overrides our extreme doubts is not itself justification for thinking that the doubts should be ignored, and naturalizing the normal along the lines that Winkler proposes does not introduce adequate grounds for discarding them. Unless Hume has sufficient warrant for discounting extreme skepticism, he is in no position to recognize nature's uniformity much less judge that his commitment to this uniformity is associated with his practical success, determine that the commitment causes this success, or formulate inductively grounded rules. To naturalize the normal as Winkler proposes, Hume already must possess a satisfactory basis for defusing his extensive doubts.[16]

Not all attempts to restrict Hume's extreme skepticism to certain sorts of reasoning or belief focus explicitly on the idea that Hume employs multiple epistemic standards and that his skepticism originates from especially strict norms. An alternative kind of tactic maintains that his radical doubts attach exclusively to rationalism of some sort. One example of such a proposal, which can be traced to Thomas Beauchamp and Alexander Rosenberg, takes Hume's skepticism to be limited to Cartesian self-evident first principles and to attempts to derive synthetic *a priori* truths from these principles by demonstrations.[17] A reason to be suspicious of this suggestion is that even if such rationalism were Hume's primary concern

elsewhere, it is not the primary target of the dangerous dilemma, for the dilemma both attacks the trivial principles of the imagination and maintains that all varieties of inference-making have a propensity to disintegrate. The proposal is also dubious on historical grounds since the *Treatise* was written when rationalism of this sort had been so widely abandoned that a lengthy attack on it would have been odd. The Royal Society rejected such rationalist approaches when it aligned itself with Baconian experimentalism in the second half of the seventeenth century, and Baconian methodologies allowed Boyle and Hooke, among others, to make significant and celebrated discoveries.[18] By the time Hume composed the *Treatise*, the scientific community endorsed various forms of Newtonianism that supplemented or replaced Bacon's techniques, and the larger literate world was fascinated by Newton's achievements, particularly the experimentalism of the *Opticks*.[19] Hume not only was well aware of the reception that empirical methodologies enjoyed, but he also appreciated the kinds of discoveries that they had facilitated and took care to associate his own activities explicitly with them by opening the *Treatise* in a way that links his science with the work of "Lord Bacon and some late philosophers in *England*, who have begun to put the science of man on a new footing" (T Intro 7; SBN xvii; see also T Abstract 2; SBN 646). Given the widespread enthusiasm for empirical approaches together with Hume's efforts to associate the science of man with an established tradition of employing them, the idea that he would have found it necessary to mount a sustained attack on the kind of rationalism that Beauchamp and Rosenberg emphasize is dubious.

Still, a case might be made that Hume's extreme skepticism afflicts a more relaxed sort of rationalism, perhaps one along the lines suggested by Annette Baier, who associates Hume's skepticism with "a solitary intellectualist reason" that emphasizes "demonstration" but includes both demonstration and induction (285). The details of Baier's conception of this sort of rationalism are obscure, for she says little about it. Although she links it to the "Cartesian solitary intellect" (3), and she maintains that Hume's skeptical crisis involves "utter solitude, amounting to autism" (19), such remarks do little to illuminate its character. She also proposes that the reasoning that escapes Hume's doubts is "a social capacity, both in its activities and in the standards of excellence by which they are judged" (280), and she maintains that reasoning of this sort gains "appropriate nourishment" in "civilized debate within 'the republic of letters,' along with thoughtful response even outside that republic, wherever reason hopes for influence" (284). But this also tells us little, since Baier does not explain what sorts of activities or standards of excellence she associates with this social reasoning. Even so, the idea that Hume's radical skepticism involves only "solitary intellectualist" reasoning fumbles on a number of grounds.

While the reasoning that *produces* Hume's extreme skepticism is in some sense *solitary*—for he describes the genesis of his melancholy in terms that indicate that

he is working alone and that often portray him as isolated and alienated—the reasoning itself is not relevantly solitary. The survey of the mind that generates the dangerous dilemma is a review of discoveries that the science of human nature has facilitated, and the basic methodology of this science not only has been venerated by the learned world for its successes but can be adopted by almost anyone. The reasoning that appears in the dilemma proper also seems to meet widely accepted canons of argument construction that have been developed according to "standards of excellence" approved by "civilized debate." In addition, Hume presents the dilemma in distinctly social terms when he notes, for example, that "if *we* assent to every trivial suggestion of the fancy," the consequences will be so embarrassing that "*we* must at last become asham'd of *our* credulity," and he observes that "[w]e save ourselves from this total scepticism" only by means of an apparently trivial property of the imagination (T 1.4.7.6–7; SBN 267–68, emphases added). Finally, the reasoning that Hume's dilemma *targets* fails to be solitary in a meaningful way, since it attacks principles that are central to human nature.

The suggestion that Hume's doubts attach only to reasoning that is *intellectualist* also fails. Reasoning might be labeled "intellectualist" by virtue of exclusively attempting to deduce synthetic *a priori* truths from self-evident, Cartesian first principles, but any reasoning that consists in demonstrative inferences alone could be awarded that label. Even reasoning that involves both demonstrative and probable inferences might be regarded as intellectualist on the grounds that inferences of either type involve conscious deliberation rather than the direct and immediate promptings of custom or instinct. Reasoning might also be said to be intellectualist whenever it is entirely free of feeling or sentiment. But none of these possibilities provides Hume with a way of satisfactorily handling the tension between his doubts and his commitments. The first suggestion is Beauchamp and Rosenberg's brand of rationalism, and the problems with taking reasoning of this sort to be the object of Hume's skepticism have already been addressed. Not only is the notion that Hume was particularly vexed by such reasoning historically implausible, but the dangerous dilemma attacks reasoning that falls outside of its narrow bounds. The second option is such a close cousin to the first proposal that it shares essentially the same defects.

Hume seems to support the third possibility, which identifies intellectualist reasoning with reasoning that involves deliberation of some sort, when he observes that "blind submission" to nature "shew[s] most perfectly our sceptical disposition and principles" (T 1.4.7.10; SBN 269). His remark can be read as asserting both that extreme skepticism affects only purposeful reflection, not mere instinct, and that insofar as one follows nature's current, one's beliefs enjoy a measure of authority that escapes the skeptic's attack. Radical skepticism thus infects only probable or demonstrative inferences. This would be a strange view for Hume to adopt, though, since it would leave him incapable of advancing

arguments, engaging in scientific activity, or participating in polite society. The proposal also sits poorly with Hume's insistence that our tendency to retain our beliefs fails to provide a satisfactory response to extreme skepticism. A further difficulty with the suggestion stems from the fact that the dilemma implicitly criticizes custom or habit when it attacks the imagination's "general and more establish'd properties" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 267). Since the dilemma casts doubt on the mind's general principles and the automatic or instinctual inferences that they support, Hume cannot take his radical skepticism to target only reasoning that is consciously deliberative. A final reason to be suspicious of this proposal is that Hume's remark about blindly acquiescing to nature can be understood so that it avoids generating these problems: Hume's claim expresses both his recognition that submitting to nature is not always a matter of choice and his belief that such behavior provides no answer to radical skepticism, at least not in the sense of resolving the skeptic's extreme doubts. Bowing to nature in this sense is "perfectly" skeptical precisely because it involves yielding to nature without ever supposing that the behavior is justified.[20]

The fourth view of intellectualist reasoning, which takes the reasoning to be stripped of feeling or sentiment, supports an account of Hume's dismissal of extreme skepticism that enjoys considerable textual support. Hume acknowledges both sentiment-free reasoning and its feeling-laden counterpart with what Don Garrett calls the *Title Principle:* "Where 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."[21] While the Principle does not explicitly mention sentiments, Hume almost immediately reveals that the "propensities" emphasized by the Principle are, or at least include, feelings when he credits both the Principle and the "sentiments" of curiosity and ambition with making philosophy possible for him again. His remarks fit well with his slightly earlier claim that philosophy alone can never overcome "the sentiments of . . . spleen and indolence . . . and expects a victory more from the return of a serious good-humour'd disposition, than from the force of reason and conviction" (T 1.4.7.11; SBN 270). The Title Principle also appears to explain why Hume can dismiss his radical doubts: extreme skepticism springs from a lifeless, sentiment-stripped reason that possesses no "title" to affect him.

Additional support for the idea that Hume takes only lifeless or unfeeling reasoning to be affected by radical skepticism can be found both in his discussion of reason's tendency to destroy itself and in his view that reason is passion's slave. When he considers the self-subversion problem in the context of the dangerous dilemma, he emphasizes that reason cannot sabotage itself unless it "acts alone" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 267), which seems to indicate that lifeless, sentiment-deprived reason destroys itself, while the feeling-infused variety escapes this fate. Hume makes essentially the same point more forcefully in his initial discussion of

reason's tendency to destroy itself much earlier in the *Treatise*: "If belief . . . were a simple act of the thought, without any peculiar manner of conception, or the addition of a force and vivacity, it must infallibly destroy itself, and in every case terminate in a total suspense of judgment" (T 1.4.1.8; SBN 184). Hume's view that "reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions" (T 2.3.3.4; SBN 415) also lends weight to the idea that he takes lively, sentiment-laden reason to escape his extreme doubts, for by making reason subservient to the passions, he gives the lifeless, feeling-deprived reasoning no authority in the *Treatise*'s remaining books.

This approach to addressing the tension between Hume's doubts and his commitments is advocated by Kemp Smith, John Wright, David Owen, and Don Garrett. Kemp Smith maintains that by making reason passion's slave, Hume is "in a position to dissent from the criticisms so frequently passed upon scepticism, and so generally accepted as being final and decisive."[22] As Wright puts the matter, "[n]othing better characterizes Hume's escape from total skepticism in the Conclusion to Book I than his famous dictum that 'reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions.'"[23] Owen advances the same sort of idea when he proposes that, according to Hume, "[r]eason cannot function properly if considered as a faculty functioning independently of our sensitive natures" (201). In other words, Hume regards lifeless, propensity-free reason as reason abused, and he believes that doubts generated by such abuse can be discarded. Garrett, who explores the matter more thoroughly than the others, focuses on the Title Principle's role in dissolving the dangerous dilemma and supporting Hume's science. Hume can set aside the imagination's trivial suggestions, Garrett argues, because they are so weak that "'lively' reflective reasoning does not sustain but instead undermines [them]," and Hume can ignore reason's tendency to subvert itself because the reasoning required for this self-destruction to take place is "'strained' and remote from our inclinations and interests" (*Cognition*, 234, 235). Hume can also practice his science of human nature since the Principle authorizes "accept[ing] refined and elaborate reasoning on philosophical topics that interest us because . . . we have a propensity to attend to, and follow, reasoning of just that kind."[24]

The textual evidence that can be marshaled on behalf of this approach to resolving the conflict in Hume's thought is impressive, but how far this strategy succeeds is another matter. One cause for concern is that the tactic appears to require Hume to distinguish sharply between reason and enlivening inclinations or propensities, which he cannot easily do. Since he associates custom with inclinations or propensities, and since custom facilitates inference-making, he seems to think that no clean line divides the one from the other. Hume also tends to identify beliefs with "sentiment[s], or lively conception[s]" (T Abstract 17; SBN 657), which suggests that he regards all non-hypothetical reasoning as lively. Even if Hume can sustain a meaningful distinction between reason and inclination, and assuming that he need not claim that all non-hypothetical reasoning is lively, this

proposal still faces considerable obstacles. Hume needs an account of how sentiments or propensities can enliven reasoning, and he must be able to explain how reasoning, so invigorated, can withstand his radical doubts. He is largely silent on both points, and the most promising proposals that might be offered on his behalf are plagued with difficulties.

Feelings or propensities might animate or mix with reasoning either by leading us to take a greater interest in it or by changing the kinds of inferences that we draw. The first option best fits Hume's claim that the feelings of curiosity and ambition make philosophy possible again. It also suggests an account of why lively reasoning enjoys greater authority than the lifeless sort: to the extent that interested reasoners are more careful, their inferences are less likely to involve mistakes. But the defects of this proposal are significant. For one thing, the inclination to attend to a piece of reasoning can change over time and vary from one person to the next, which means that the very same reasoning that survives radical skepticism on one occasion or with one person can succumb to the skepticism at another time or with a different individual. Garrett suggests that this problem can be avoided if we shift our focus away from particular people to human nature more generally (private correspondence). However, the kinds of things that evoke feelings of excitement or interest in people vary so enormously—depending on, for example, backgrounds, temperaments, aptitudes, opportunities, and ages—that this is unhelpful. Hume suggests a way of handling this kind of disagreement much later in the *Treatise*, when he reflects on the origin of natural virtues and vices and observes that "every particular person's pleasure and interest [is] different" and that this diversity seems to make it "impossible [that] men cou'd ever agree in their sentiments and judgments" (T 3.3.1.30; SBN 591). He goes on to say that men nevertheless can resolve their disagreements by selecting "some common point of view from which they might survey their object, and which might cause it to appear the same to all of them" (T 3.3.1; SBN 591). One might think that a similar appeal to "some common point of view" could resolve disagreements over what should animate or enliven our reasoning. Baier may have something like this in mind when she ties Hume's "passionate" reason to a social factor that is "answerable to the shared moral sentiment" (280), a proposal that she does not explain. But identifying lively reasoning by appealing to a common point of view prevents Hume from relying on this reasoning to defuse his radical doubts, for adopting a common point of view requires a fairly sophisticated understanding of the world, and Hume cannot possess such an understanding unless he has already discarded his doubts. If Hume must have adequate grounds for setting aside his extreme skepticism before he can appeal to a common point of view that will allow him to determine what counts as suitably lively reasoning, he cannot use lively reasoning to justify discounting his radical skepticism.

The notion that feelings or inclinations enliven reasoning by leading us to take an interest in it can be criticized on additional grounds. Hume has little patience with poetical enthusiasm and religious zealotry, and understanding lively reasoning in the way that this account proposes would force him to view both more favorably, since each can inspire us to take greater interest in something than we otherwise would. A more significant difficulty with the account is that if lively reasoning is simply reasoning that interests us, it is incapable of surviving Hume's extreme doubts. The notion that interested reasoners are always more careful reasoners is a questionable one, since inflamed passions can interfere with the mind's operations and warp its inferences. In any event, when we do credit interested reasoners with skill in reasoning, we do so not because they have certain kinds of sentiments but because they tend to act in ways that promote better reasoning, perhaps as a result of their feelings. Such reasoners may, for example, proceed more slowly and recheck their work, which can endow their conclusions with greater credibility. But this sort of activity can do nothing to disperse Hume's doubts, for if the inferences themselves are as suspect as the dangerous dilemma proposes, then executing them slowly or multiple times—or whatever else we normally do when we take ourselves to be reasoning carefully—cannot show that they are credible. Because the dilemma calls into question our ability to reason, we cannot discount Hume's radical doubts by appealing to lively reasoning understood as reasoning that we take an interest in and that is thus (generally) successful.

The second account of how sentiments or inclinations might animate reason and supply it with the authority necessary to survive Hume's sweeping doubts takes feelings or propensities to mingle with reason in a way that leads us to draw a new or different kind of inference. This proposal essentially forces us to distinguish two kinds of reasoning: a lifeless, unmingled sort, untouched by sentiments or propensities, and a mixed, dynamic variety in which feelings or inclinations somehow produce an alternative kind of inference. Although precisely how either sort of reasoning should be understood is not entirely clear, the best candidate for the pure, unmixed variety is the type of inferential activity associated with deductive arguments, since the rules that govern these inferences cede no authority whatsoever to sentiments or propensities. Given that inferences facilitated by lively, mixed reasoning must literally take a different form, and that inclinations or propensities play a role in generating them, the most promising place to locate them lies with custom or habit. Not only do the inferences that custom directly facilitates differ in structure from traditional deductions, but Hume takes the mental processes that custom employs to involve some natural propensity or instinct. When custom operates, it functions automatically and immediately, outside of our conscious control. The reasoning associated with deductive arguments lacks such vivacity.

But deductive inferences and inferences driven directly by custom are not the only kinds of inferences that we make, and some of the others cannot easily be

accommodated by the schema that this proposal supplies. Reasoning associated with probable arguments is particularly tricky to accommodate. The roots of the inferences associated with probable arguments lie in custom, and the inferences have the same form as those that custom immediately dictates (that is, they ultimately involve the same sorts of inputs and outputs). To the extent that the liveliness of an inference is determined by its structure, the inferences are thus lively. Yet when we construct or review probable arguments, our minds generally operate in a deliberate, stepwise, and artificial fashion rather than unconsciously and immediately, and our efforts often more closely resemble our labors with deductive arguments. Insofar as the liveliness of an inference is determined by the manner in which it is drawn, probable inferences of this sort are lifeless. Further complicating the proposed schema is the fact that with enough practice, some of our deductive inferences can become instantaneous and automatic, which makes them lively insofar as their manner of execution goes. Since some inferences can gradually become more effortless and unconscious, moreover, liveliness appears to come in degrees. Reasoning that is lively for one person at one time consequently need not be as lively, if lively at all, for that person at another time, and it may not be lively for a different individual. Yet if liveliness is so complex, the notion that only lively reason escapes Hume's radical skepticism looks insupportable.

One might try to rehabilitate the proposal by maintaining that the livelier a chain of reasoning is, the better positioned it is to survive Hume's radical doubts. The liveliest reasoning is completely immune to his skepticism, the dullest wholly overcome, and the rest falls somewhere in between. But this move only introduces other difficulties by inviting questions about *how* lively reasoning must be to resist Hume's doubts, and *how* lifeless it can become before it succumbs to them, and these questions appear impossible to answer in any satisfactory way given how multifaceted and variable liveliness is. We might avoid confronting the questions by insisting that reasoning cannot be lively unless its inferences both have a particular structure (that is, the form found with inferences that custom directly dictates) and are performed in a specific manner (that is, the unreflective and instantaneous fashion found with custom). Alternatively, we could focus exclusively on the form, or consider only the execution. However, each of these options seems ad hoc given the similarities between the reasoning that it identifies as lively and many of the other inferences that we draw.

Two remaining objections confront attempts to understand lively reasoning by appealing to inclinations or propensities that lead us to execute some new or different type of inference. First, the proposals are at odds with Hume's claim that the *sentiments* of curiosity and ambition enliven his reasoning and allow him to return to philosophy, for feelings of ambition and curiosity are not propensities or inclinations, at least not in any way that relevantly resembles custom. Curiosity and ambition, at least as Hume treats them, seem more naturally viewed as moods

or mindsets that can lead us to take an interest in reasoning. Second, the kind of inferences that these accounts associate with liveliness is not immune to Hume's radical doubts. When the dangerous dilemma attacks the mind's "general and more establish'd properties" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 267), it undermines not only deductive inferences but inferences that custom directly mediates and that appear in probable arguments. Each of the above accounts of lively reasoning takes lively reasoning to consist in one or more of these three kinds of inferences.

There is a further reason to reject any attempt to defuse the conflict between Hume's doubts and his commitments by appealing to lively reasoning, regardless of whether the reasoning is understood as reasoning that interests us or reasoning that involves some alternative kind of inference that some propensity or inclination leads us to make. All such proposals ultimately rely on the Title Principle to explain why Hume is warranted in dismissing his extreme skepticism, for the Principle is what authorizes assenting to lively reasoning and discounting the lifeless sort. It tells us that we "ought to" assent to the one and that the other "never can have any title to operate upon us" (T 1.4.7.11; SBN 270). But Hume has no satisfactory justification for accepting or deploying the rule. The dangerous dilemma prevents him from defending the Principle by the kind of reasoning that the dilemma targets, and he cannot support the Principle with lively reasoning (assuming that the dilemma does not target it) since this would be question-begging.

In response to this last criticism, it might be urged that Hume does not have to justify using the Title Principle before he employs it because the Principle can "speak for itself." Garrett advances such a proposal when he argues that

> reason cannot initially establish the reliability of the Title Principle, but human nature leads us to reason and believe in accordance with it anyway. Once we do so, the Principle can be made to speak in its own favor, for reasoning that is in accordance with the principle will best satisfy our curiosity, gratify our ambition, and protect us from the dangerous and disturbing excesses of superstition. (*Cognition*, 235)

We naturally follow the Title Principle, the behavior benefits us, and the benefits warrant our acceptance of the rule. Just what this means is unclear, however, and none of the ways in which the idea might be developed provides much help to Hume.

According to one way of understanding Garrett's proposal, the Title Principle can speak in its own defense because the Principle authorizes lively reasoning, and lively reasoning in turn authorizes it. We develop an interest in the Principle and feel inclined to accept it only after we have recognized that it is reliable and useful, but once this occurs, we can advance lively reasoning to defend the rule. This suggestion looks question-begging since it defends the Principle by employing the

very sort of reasoning that the Principle is supposed to license, but a case might be made that we routinely come to be justified in accepting claims only after we have discovered on the basis of experience that they are true. I come to be warranted in regarding the knife I bought at a drugstore as a better tool for cutting fruit than the more expensive one that I received as a present only after I have tried both and found the one to be superior. Yet if Hume accepts the Title Principle on grounds of this sort, he cannot appeal to it to defuse his radical doubts, for to be justified in accepting the Principle because he *recognizes* that it is trustworthy or useful, he must employ faculties of the mind that the dangerous dilemma targets. This means that if Hume is relying on these faculties to judge that the Principle is reliable or efficacious, he already has sufficient grounds for dispelling his extreme skepticism and therefore cannot employ the Principle to show that his skepticism can be dismissed. A further point worth noting is that if Hume is justified in accepting the Principle because he *recognizes* its trustworthiness or utility, then *liveliness* no longer plays a significant role in justifying the rule, and the sense in which the Principle speaks in its own defense shifts significantly.

Perhaps it will be said that the Title Principle can defend itself simply by virtue of its reliability or usefulness. We need not *recognize* that it is effective to be warranted in accepting it; we need only follow it successfully (which we cannot help but do). The Principle is justified solely on the grounds of how well it equips us to satisfy our curiosity, fulfill our ambitions, and escape from superstition, among other things. Insofar as this defense of the Principle is supposed to explain why Hume can dismiss radical skepticism, it also falls flat. Unless Hume has some reason to believe that he is following the Principle correctly, he is in no position to appeal to it to eradicate his doubts. But possessing sufficient grounds for believing that he is complying with the rule requires already having adequate warrant for dismissing his doubts, and as a result, he cannot appeal to the Principle to justify his rejection of extreme skepticism.[25]

A final variation on the restricted scope strategy is advanced by Don Baxter, who quarantines Hume's radical doubts by distinguishing two kinds of assent: active endorsement and passive acquiescence.[26] The first consists in intentionally assenting to something on the basis of beliefs that one regards as adequate, and thus involves an act of will, while the second is a causal product that results when appearances force themselves upon one, or one yields to nature. Hume's skepticism consists in suspending the first, because his radical doubts show that we can never possess sufficiently good reasons for accepting anything, but retaining the second. This allows Hume to quarantine his doubts in the sense that they do not prevent him from interacting with polite society or continuing his philosophical work, since passive acquiescence is sufficient for both. As Baxter explains, Hume can view the goals of his science as reasonable, its methodology as rigorous, and its findings as true, important, and defensible as long his assent in these matters

is passive. The aims of his science *merely strike him* as sensible; his practices and procedures *simply present themselves to him* as thorough; and his discoveries *just appear to him* as accurate, significant, and supportable. Hume can consequently undertake the projects that he claims to pursue and even approach them with the kind of self-confidence that he often exudes, provided that it too arises passively.[27]

Support for this approach appears in passages in which Hume acknowledges two varieties of assent, including his careful discussions of custom and his account of how nature rescues him from his philosophical melancholy. But the account also requires a highly disconcerting reinterpretation of other material in the *Treatise*, since it prevents us from taking Hume's statements about his ambitions and methodology at face value. When Hume announces his desire to advance the state of philosophy by revealing "more distinctly those subjects, where alone [philosophers] can expect assurance and conviction" (T.1.4.7.4; SBN 273), for example, we must remember that his considered opinion is that no improvement is possible, for his extreme doubts commit him to holding that we can never enjoy suitably good grounds for believing anything. His remark merely reports on how things strike him at the moment. Similar reinterpretations are required to understand his claims to correct the "defect" in other accounts of logic (T Abstract 4; SBN 646–47), his ambitions to establish "the only solid foundation for the other sciences" (T Intro 7; SBN xvi), and his rules for judging causes and effects. While some portions of the *Treatise* defy a straightforward reading, this material seems not to belong to that category. Hume gives us no indication that he is simply expressing how things appear to him at the moment.

Reinterpreting the *Treatise* along the lines that Baxter proposes also threatens to rob the work of deep significance for Hume and for us. If Hume's fully considered position is that radical doubts preclude our ever acquiring adequate reasons for believing anything, then his similarly reflective stance on the projects of the *Treatise* must be that they are bankrupt. This makes his lengthy pursuit of them puzzling. Baxter sees no difficulty here, first, because Hume can regard engaging in his science as an "innocent pleasure" and, second, because Hume's activities do not involve active assent (private correspondence). But both suggestions are troubling. How anyone can find genuine pleasure in a project that, from a suitably reflective stance, she also views as entirely without merit is not easy to understand, at least not when the project is as comprehensive and consuming to the person undertaking it as writing the *Treatise* was for Hume. A related, further difficulty with Baxter's proposal is that it requires us to attribute to Hume a particularly disturbing form of cognitive dissonance, for the very things that Hume enjoys and passionately (if passively) pursues, he also thoroughly (and actively) repudiates. The science that Hume performs enthusiastically, that he takes to employ exacting standards, and that he claims yields significant discoveries, he also fully believes can never merit his active and considered acceptance. This requires a kind of madness.

Whether we can accept Baxter's proposal and continue to regard the *Treatise* as a major accomplishment is also unclear. The significance of a text is obviously independent of an author's thoughts about its value, and for that reason we seem well-positioned to maintain that the *Treatise* is important even if, as Baxter maintains, Hume cannot really endorse this view himself. But the greater our regard for the book, the more difficult it is to suppose that Hume does not actively support anything in it, or at least seriously believe that parts of the text deserve fully reflective consideration. This is not to say that whenever we come across a particularly valuable argument or idea, we ought to assume authorial endorsement. However, the *Treatise* is not a fistful of notions with an insightful argument or two but a sustained, extensive, multi-layered, highly perceptive, and often compellingly reasoned study of the mind. To the extent that we regard it as a monumental achievement, the idea that Hume's fully considered judgment is that nothing in it merits endorsement (or at least fully reflective assessment) is not easy to accept. Preserving our esteem for the *Treatise* while accepting Baxter's reading of it is thus not easy to do.[28]

The enormous difficulties associated with attempts to ease the conflict between Hume's doubts and commitments by isolating or limiting his skepticism reveal that restricted scope strategies ultimately do not work. The route they offer for resolving the tension in Hume's thinking fares no better in the end than the suggestions made by thoroughgoing skeptical proposals, complete naturalist strategies, arguments that the dangerous dilemma is self-defeating, and tactics that treat either Hume's doubts or his commitments in a purely instrumental fashion. Given the tremendous problems that these stratagems face, the idea that Hume speaks with one consistent voice throughout the *Treatise* appears impossible to defend, and the view that he sometimes simply ignores his extreme skepticism seems inescapable. If this picture is right, the *Treatise* contains multiple, conflicting, and irreconcilable positions, and only a Several-Humes approach can do justice to the text.

Taking several Humes to populate the *Treatise* does not require viewing the text as an unredeemable chaotic mess. Perspectival approaches, for example, offer one way of making sense of Hume's work. Although they take Hume to adopt diverse and incompatible positions, and they insist that he cannot supply adequate grounds for preferring one standpoint to another, they also propose that Hume can inhabit a stance for a sustained period and that when he does, he can recognize and employ epistemic norms within it. As a result, Hume can engage in long-term projects and make valuable discoveries, provided that these are appropriately relativized. Perspectival maneuvers thus introduce a way of containing the damage that Hume's radical skepticism does, for they restrict his extreme doubts to a specific perspective, and this isolates the skepticism from his other pursuits.

Graciela de Pierris, Paul Russell, and Robert Fogelin adopt this kind of approach to the *Treatise*. De Pierris distinguishes the position of extreme skepticism, which

acknowledges only rational argument, from the standpoint of natural beliefs, which is "our natural frame of mind outside of radical skeptical philosophy" and is associated with common life, mitigated skepticism, and the science of man.[29] On De Pierris's reading, curiosity and profound, intense reflection can transport Hume from natural belief to radical skepticism, while carelessness and inattention, or blindly submitting to nature's current, can ease him back again, but arguments play no role in justifying these transitions. Hume undergoes "simply a bare switch in perspective from one point of view to the other" (367). Russell, who initially focuses on the first *Enquiry*, advances fundamentally the same proposal. He agrees both that Hume moves readily between an extremely skeptical position and a more moderate stance, and that no arguments warrant these shifts, when he asserts,

> Where the influence of reason is strong, and the circumstances encourage skeptical reflection, our disposition to doubt and uncertainty will be more pronounced. Where this is not the case, 'vanity' and 'pride,' combined with the force of instinct, will subdue all such skeptical tendencies, and our propensity to dogmatism, and to speculate about 'remote' subjects, will return. (Russell, 370–71n9)

Fogelin offers a more complex picture that takes Hume to move among four distinct perspectives: gentleman, wise and cautious inquirer, Pyrrhonian and despairing skeptic, and hare-brained enthusiast.[30] The Humes that inhabit the *Treatise* can discuss the same things, and one Hume can even assess another's beliefs or practices, but these assessments fail to generate "unequivocal, across-the-board" (165) reasons for preferring one belief or standpoint. The wise Hume may well think that the gentleman has false, unfounded opinions and that the Pyrrhonist goes too far, but he cannot advance a nonquestion-begging argument to support his position over theirs. As a result, we cannot assign either beliefs or assessments of beliefs to Hume in any clear and unambiguous way.

Since perspectival approaches not only enable Hume to separate his doubts from his commitments but also allow him to engage each at some length, they have considerable appeal. Still, they offer no genuine resolution to the tension in his work, as their advocates generally acknowledge. De Pierris, for example, maintains that Hume's standpoints remain at odds, "side by side without eliminating or annihilating one another" (355), while Fogelin stresses that an inconsistent belief system need not be useless, that attempts to avoid inconsistency at all costs can distort a philosopher's views, and that "most great philosophic positions [are] deeply impregnated with inconsistency or with other forms of incoherence."[31] No doubt some inconsistencies in the *Treatise* are unavoidable, but the magnitude of conflict between radical skepticism and Hume's commitments to daily life and philosophy is so massive that it is extremely distressing, and this makes

perspectival approaches ultimately dissatisfying. Before settling for one, we should note that Hume would not approve. When discussing two conflicting principles, his antipathy toward vacillating between them is plain: "How then shall we adjust those principles together? Which of them shall we prefer? Or in case we prefer neither of them, but successively assent to both, as is usual among philosophers, with what confidence can we afterwards usurp that glorious title, when we thus knowingly embrace a manifest contradiction?" (T 1.4.7.4; SBN 266) Someone who has no patience with serially endorsing incompatible principles can hardly be expected to support successively accepting incompatible positions.

One might try to escape this difficulty by urging that the different standpoints that Hume adopts are wholly incommensurate and thus incapable of conflicting with each other, with the result that the *Treatise* contains no tensions to eliminate.[32] But as a reading of what Hume takes himself to be doing, this is anachronistic, and the account is not compellingly supported by the text. Relativizing norms to distinct perspectives would have been a foreign maneuver in Hume's day, and he gives no indication that he regards, say, radical skepticism as just one isolated position among several that might be adopted. He gives every indication that his doubts pose a serious, "across-the-board" problem for philosophy and common life.

Perspectival accounts can shade into developmental ones that promise to yield greater coherence to Hume's thought by virtue of maintaining that he changes his positions as his thinking evolves. Wayne Waxman seems to favor this sort of tactic when he tells us that

> The skepticism which slowly engulfs the reader of the first book of the *Treatise* is not a product of wild dreams or intoxicated visions (and in that sense is no nightmare) but of cold, hard reflections emblematic of reason at its soberest and most vigilant: reason determined at all costs to remain true to sound, wakeful experience and to be guided exclusively by 'principles which are permanent, irresistible, and universal.' (T 1.4.4.1; SBN 225)[33]

Robert Fogelin approves a developmental strategy when he credits the fourth part of Book 1 with providing "the first phenomenology of mind—an account of how a sequence of philosophical perspectives unfolds within oneself when pursuing philosophy in an unrestricted manner" ("Consistency," 163).

Developmental approaches might maintain that Hume's shifts in perspectives are causally forced upon him, grounded in reasons for rejecting one standpoint in favor of another, or a mixture of both factors. Advocates of such proposals are not always clear on this point. Further complicating matters is that a developmental reading of the *Treatise* need not take several distinct Humes to occupy the text. Someone who thinks that Hume is a naturalist but that his naturalism grows

increasingly sophisticated as his understanding of the mind improves might hold a Single-Hume view and claim that Hume speaks with one consistent voice throughout the work. There is, moreover, probably no precise boundary between Single-Hume developmental approaches and Several-Humes ones, since a specific instant at which two perspectives become so different that they must be regarded as fully distinct and incompatible rarely exists.

Adopting a Several-Humes developmental strategy is tempting, since such an approach fits the basic arc of the *Treatise* so well. When Hume introduces his project by emphasizing his interest in establishing a science of human nature, he positions himself as a naturalist, a stance that he occupies throughout much of Book 1 as he conducts a lengthy investigation of the mind's operations. Eventually, his discoveries yield a dilemma so powerful that it appears to destroy his work, and he finds himself in despair. Upon recovering from his melancholy, he embraces a "true" skepticism and revised naturalism that he upholds through Books 2 and 3 (T 1.4.7.14; SBN 273). Nonetheless, the idea that Hume's thinking develops or evolves is not by itself enough to ease the conflict between his doubts and his commitments. If he rejects and permanently abandons some standpoints for others, and if his shifts in perspective constitute advancements in his thinking, we need an account that explains what licenses his moves and why his later perspectives improve upon his earlier ones. To propose merely that Hume's thinking evolves is not yet to explain why he can reject one standpoint for another, much less indicate what makes his later positions superior. This means that Several-Humes developmental approaches are at best incomplete and must be supplemented to ease the tension in Hume's thought. Promising avenues for defusing the conflict have been explored throughout this paper, and none is up to the task.

A final option for approaching the opposing elements in Hume's work is to abandon any attempt to contain or minimize the conflict between them. This sort of proposal is advocated by Yves Michaud, who takes Hume to swing from one highly unstable position to another, never resting for long in any one spot and utterly incapable of undertaking any projects. According to Michaud, Hume views all states of mind as in perpetual flux and regards extreme skepticism as not a philosophical stance that can be defended or challenged, but "just one mood among rival ones" that "sometimes . . . comes over us, sometimes fades away" (39). Richard Popkin leans in the direction of the same sort of account when he maintains that at any given instant, Hume "will be as dogmatic as he feels at that moment, or as sceptical as he feels," depending on how nature inclines him.[34] Hume does sometimes simply shift from one position to another—as when nature initially rescues him from his philosophical melancholy—but proposals that say that there is no more to the *Treatise* than this can make no sense of the work that Hume both claims to want to accomplish and appears to undertake, and this makes them completely unacceptable.

In conclusion, Hume's dangerous dilemma introduces a conflict between his radical skepticism, on the one hand, and his common life activities and philosophical pursuits, on the other, that none of the tactics considered in this paper adequately addresses. Proposals that prevent the tension from arising in the first place by denying that Hume takes significant portions of the *Treatise* seriously fail to do justice to the complexity of his thought. Accounts that acknowledge this complexity and attempt to alleviate the tension that it creates by repurposing or isolating Hume's doubts so that he can speak with one consistent voice throughout the text founder in various ways. This makes the view that diverse and incompatible Humes populate the *Treatise* seem inevitable, but this is a profoundly unattractive position that appears at odds with Hume's own assessment of how we should understand his work. We can always hope that further examination of the *Treatise* will lead to a more satisfying resolution of the opposing elements in his thinking, but the nature and the depth of the conflict make this appear naive. Hume seems caught in a labyrinth whose elements he neither can correct nor render consistent, and whose existence he does not always acknowledge. Fortunately for us, the *Treatise* remains a magnificent text, and examining this particular difficulty can teach us a great deal. To the extent that we can avoid the assumptions that generate Hume's skepticism and constrain his ability to respond to it, the problem that he faces need not be our own.

NOTES

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 37th International Hume Conference in Antwerp, Belgium, July 2010. I am especially indebted to Don Garrett, who was the commentator, for his careful reading, probing criticisms, and willingness to look at a subsequent draft. Don Baxter also deserves special thanks for his contributions to the session and his later correspondence with me, which deepened my understanding of his position's subtleties. The editors of *Hume Studies* and two anonymous referees for the journal offered helpful suggestions, as did other participants at the Antwerp event, notably Donald Ainslie, Angela Calvo de Saavedra, Graciela de Pierris, and Jani Hakkarainen. I am particularly grateful to Max Grober for his stimulating conversations, patience, and support.

1 References to the *Treatise* are to David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), hereafter cited as "T" followed by Book, part, section, and paragraph numbers; and to *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, revised by P. H. Nidditch, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), hereafter cited as "SBN" followed by page number. References to the first *Enquiry* are to David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), hereafter cited as "EHU" followed by section and paragraph; and to *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*,

ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, revised by P. H. Nidditch, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), hereafter "SBN" followed by page number.

2 This is a highly compressed picture of Hume's initial treatment of the self-subversion problem, but many of the details of the earlier discussion are not essential here. One point of interest is that when Hume first considers reason's tendency to destroy itself, he grants that successfully performed demonstrations yield knowledge, but when he returns to the issue at the end of Book 1, he does not recognize this possibility. For a discussion of Hume's original handling of reason's tendency to destroy itself, see Don Garrett's "Skepticism and Commitment," in his *Cognition and Commitment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 205–41; David Owen's *Hume's Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Donald Ainslie's "Hume's Scepticism and Ancient Scepticisms," in *Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Jon Miller and Brad Inwood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 251–73.

3 Hume offers no further explanation of the nature of the skepticism that his dilemma introduces, and most of his readers are content with noting that it subverts all reason and belief. But Robert Fogelin provides a useful framework that can enrich our understanding of it (or any skepticism), for the schema allows us to distinguish a skepticism's object, domain, degree, origin, persistence level and character. *Hume's Skepticism in the* Treatise of Human Nature (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985). Applying this framework to Hume's claims about the skepticism associated with his dangerous dilemma enables us to tease out a number of the skepticism's features: The *object* of radical skepticism is epistemological insofar as the skepticism concerns the warrant for our beliefs, not their intelligibility. The skepticism's *domain* is particularly broad because it targets all beliefs, and its *degree* is unmitigated, for it takes all beliefs to be completely unwarranted. Since the skepticism arises after studying the mind's limitations rather than prior to all inquiry, its *origin* is "consequent," and since we cannot sustain it, its *persistence* level is "variable." Our inability to uphold radical skepticism additionally means that its *character* is "theoretical" rather than "practicing."

A refinement on this system is offered by Don Garrett, who divides theoretical skepticism into *epistemic merit* skepticism, which holds that the targeted beliefs lack merit (and so do not *deserve* our assent), and *rational support* skepticism, which maintains that the beliefs were not *produced* in a satisfactory way but have (or could have) epistemic merit and deserve our approval. "'A Small Tincture of Pyrrhonism': Skepticism and Naturalism in Hume's Science of Man," in *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 68–98, 80. To the degree that the skepticism associated with the dangerous dilemma is concerned with the way that our beliefs are in fact generated and so calls into question our actual warrant for them, it is *rational support* skepticism but not *epistemic merit* skepticism because it does not challenge the beliefs' worthiness to be accepted. Insofar as rational support skepticism implies that we should not assent to the beliefs, it is also "prescriptive" (in Fogelin's terminology). This picture grows more complicated when we take into account that radical skepticism targets not just the warrant for our beliefs but our ability to reason effectively. Some of the same labels that Fogelin and Garrett provide still apply—both radical skepticism about our beliefs and radical scepticism about our reasoning are *unmitigated*, for example—but others prove more problematic. Extreme skepticism about the cogency of our reasoning, for instance, seems better identified with epistemic merit skepticism than it does with the rational support variety.

4 Philosophers who address the tension in Hume's work often prefer a multi-pronged approach that employs a variety of tactics. In what follows, I focus on individual stratagems rather than clusters. This strikes me as a sound course, since a proposal that advances several faulty strategies is not the stronger for it.

5 Dialectical, ironic, and literary readings of various passages in the *Treatise* are compatible, of course, with Single-Hume views and Several-Humes accounts. For a helpful discussion of the extent to which Hume uses literary techniques, see Peter Loptson's "Hume, Multiperspectival Pluralism, and Authorial Voice," *Hume Studies* 24.2 (1998): 313–34.

6 See J. H. Randall, Jr., "David Hume: Radical Empiricist and Pragmatist," in *Freedom and Experience: Essays Presented to Horace M. Kallen*, ed. S. Hook and M. R. Konvitz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1947), 289–312, 296. Hume's extreme skepticism, Randall urges, is a literary device, and his "whole attitude" toward it is, "I don't for a minute believe it, any more than you do. But refute it if you can; I won't." Randall, "David Hume: Radical Empiricist," 297. Randall takes Hume to develop a positive position in the *Dialogues*. Those who maintain that Hume is nothing but a skeptic include J. S. Mill, who claims that "regard for truth formed no part of his [Hume's] character. He reasoned with surprising acuteness; but the object of his reasonings was not to obtain truth but to shew that it is unattainable." Review of *A History of the British Empire, from the Accession of Charles I., to the Restoration*, by George Brodie, Esq. *The Westminster Review* 2 (1824): 346–402; 346. But not everyone who regards Hume as an extreme skeptic unambiguously thinks that he is nothing but such a skeptic. Reid, for example, is either ambivalent or changes his mind. At one point, Reid asserts that Hume "built a system of scepticism, which leaves no ground to believe any one thing rather than its contrary" and "overturns all philosophy, all religion and virtue, and all commonsense." *Thomas Reid's an Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense: A Critical Edition*, ed. Derek Brookes (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2000), 4, 5, based on the 4th edition (London, 1785). Yet Reid elsewhere acknowledges that Hume advances a number of positive theses, including the claims that belief belongs to the sensitive, not the cogitative, part of our nature and that reason is, and should be, the passions' slave. "There are Rational Principles of Action in Man," in *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (Edinburgh: John Bell, 1788), 205–208, 207.

7 John Passmore and Annette C. Baier take the argument to be a *reductio* (or a component of one), but they emphasize that it is a part of an attack on Cartesianism. Passmore, for example, writes that "Hume . . . is working within the Cartesian tradition; and within that tradition his argument is effective *ad hominem*." *Hume's Intentions* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 135. Baier calls Book 1 a "*reductio ad absurdum* of Cartesian intellect." *A Progress of Sentiments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 21. Later in this paper, I consider the problems associated with holding that Hume's skepticism focuses on Cartesianism.

8 The passage in which Hume's assessment appears is complicated, and since it invites misunderstanding, a bit more needs to be said. A casual reading of the text suggests that Hume agrees that skeptical arguments refute themselves and can therefore be discounted, for he remarks that "the sceptical reasonings, were it possible for them to exist, and were they not destroyed by their subtility, would be successively both strong and weak" (T 1.4.1.12; SBN 186–87). This claim seems to assert that skeptical arguments

cannot exist, and hence that we can dismiss them, because they subvert themselves. But Hume's point is that the reasoning contained in skeptical arguments is so refined and remote that we can neither sustain it nor uphold its conclusions. Textual evidence that supports interpreting Hume's remark in this way appears in the immediately preceding passages where Hume explains that "the conviction, which arises from a *subtile* reasoning, diminishes in proportion to the efforts, which the imagination makes to enter into the reasoning, and to conceive it in all its parts" (T 1.4.1.12; SBN 186, emphasis added). As these comments reveal, Hume takes our minds to be so constituted that the more intricate or subtle a strand of reasoning is, the greater the difficulty we have following it, and the weaker its impact on us. This foreshadows his much later claim, when considering the dangerous dilemma, that "[v]ery refin'd reflections have little or no influence upon us" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 268).

9 Garrett, *Cognition*, 236. Garrett's approach is multi-faceted, and I explore its other elements later in this paper.

10 Paul Russell, *The Riddle of Hume's* Treatise*: Skepticism, Naturalism, and Irreligion* (New York, NY: Oxford, 2008), 221. I consider the other main component of Russell's proposal below.

11 Ainslie, "Hume's Scepticism," 265. Although Ainslie develops this idea when discussing "Of Scepticism with Regard to Reason" (T 1.4.1; SBN 180–87), the same line of argument could be advanced against the dangerous dilemma. This is one aspect of Ainslie's treatment of Hume's skepticism, but I address the other shortly.

12 Stewart backs away from this interpretation when he acknowledges that Hume advances a principle of association and criticizes him for carrying it "a great deal too far." "Of the Influence of Association on our Active Principles, and on our Moral Judgments," in *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (Cambridge: Hilliard and Brown, 1829), 284–92, 287.

13 Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume: A Critical Study of its Origins and Central Doctrines*, ed. Don Garrett (1941; repr. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 132. Later in this paper, I address the other element of Kemp Smith's approach to handling Hume's doubts.

14 An argument might be made that the point of rechecking our judgments is to achieve certainty, or something like it, and hence that Hume's interest ultimately lies in this level of conviction. But the dilemma's attack on the mind's trivial suggestions, Hume's insistence that we lack even "the lowest degree of evidence" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 267) for our beliefs, and his claim to be chiefly interested in probable reasoning make this implausible.

15 Kenneth Winkler, "Hume's Inductive Skepticism," in *The Empiricists: Critical Essays on Locke, Berkeley, and Hume*, ed. Margaret Atherton (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 183–212, 206. Although Winkler's discussion engages both the first *Enquiry* and the *Treatise*, his proposal can be applied to the material in the *Treatise* alone. Jani Hakkarainen similarly distinguishes the epistemic standards of philosophy from those of common life, though Hakkarainen's interest lies in the first *Enquiry*. "Hume's Skepticism and Realism," *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* 20, 283–309. Hakkarainen does not explain the two standards, apart from noting that they differ in degree and

telling us that philosophy's norms are "stricter" because "in the philosophical domain the same rational capacities are followed in a more rigorous and systematic manner."

16 Winkler is not entirely satisfied with this proposal, though on different grounds. His concern involves Hume's "positive" reason for restricting our investigations to common life given our inability to satisfy the norms of foundational philosophy. Winkler reports that he has "so far been unable to discover what it [Hume's reason] is, or even what it could be" (208). This difficulty seems more pronounced in the first *Enquiry*, for in the *Treatise*, Hume acknowledges 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 1.4.7.14; SBN 271).

17 Thomas Beauchamp and Alexander Rosenberg regard this picture of reason as "the single most important rationalist view under scrutiny in his [Hume's] work." *Hume and the Problem of Causation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1981), 42. Since their interest lies in Hume's treatment of causation and inductive inference rather than his dangerous dilemma, whether they would endorse this way of handling Hume's radical skepticism is unclear. However, their interpretation makes possible this response to Hume's extreme doubts, and so I trace the proposal to their reading. It is perhaps worth remembering that repudiating some forms of rationalism is compatible with sympathy toward other varieties and with valuing the work of some rationalists. As Peter Kail reminds us, some passages in the *Treatise* are "near word-for-word translations" of material from Malebranche's *Search After Truth*, and, Kail argues, Hume borrows Malebranche's "argumentative strategies" when discussing necessary connection and the self, though Hume draws different conclusions. Peter Kail, "Hume, Malebranche, and 'Rationalism,'" *Philosophy* 83 (2008): 311–32, 320, 331.

18 For a discussion of Bacon's influence, see Madeline Muntersbjorn, "Francis Bacon's Philosophy of Science: *Machina Intellectus* and *Forma Indita*" *Philosophy of Science* 70.5 (2003): 1137–48; and Graham Rees, "Reflections on the Reputation of Francis Bacon's Philosophy," *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 65.3/4 (2002): 379–94.

19 Newton's influence has been widely studied, though his debt to Bacon remains underappreciated by contemporary historians and philosophers. For a discussion of the reception of Newton's ideas, see Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs and Margaret Jacob, "The Culture of Newtonianism: 1687–1800," in *Newton and the Culture of Newtonianism* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1995), 61–124; and Margaret C. Jacob and Larry Stewart, *Practical Matter: Newton's Science in the Service of Industry and Empire, 1687–1851* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

20 This reading sits nicely with Hume's remark that "we assent to our faculties, and employ our reason, only because we cannot help it. Philosophy wou'd render us entirely *Pyrrhonian*, were nature not too strong for it" (T Abstract 27; SBN 657). If philosophy would prevent us from assenting if only she were powerful enough, she must not regard the fact that we "cannot help" but acquiesce as an acceptable answer to extreme skepticism. Such an attitude agrees well with Hume's remark that he "knows not what ought to be done" about the dangerous dilemma and can only report that we commonly forget the problem since "[v]ery refin'd reflections have little or no influence upon us" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 268).

21 Hume, T 1.4.7.11; SBN 270. See Garrett, *Cognition*, and Don Garret, "Tincture," and "Hume's Conclusions in 'Conclusion of this Book,'" in *The Blackwell Guide to Hume's* Treatise, ed. Saul Traiger (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 151–75. Yves Michaud seems to have been the first to note explicitly the Principle's importance to Hume, though Michaud denies that the Principle has anything to do with reasons or could license anything. "How to Become a Moderate Skeptic: Hume's Way Out of Pyrrhonism," *Hume Studies* 11 (1985): 33–46. For Michaud, the Principle is merely "the effect of a causal process, that is the effect of a lively disposition" (40).

22 Kemp Smith, *Hume*, 488. When Kemp Smith makes these remarks, he is discussing "Of Scepticism with Regard to Reason (T 1.4.1.1; SBN 180ff), but insofar as the same reasoning is embedded in the dangerous dilemma, I take it that he would favor the same sort of response to it.

23 John Wright, *Hume's* Treatise of Hume Nature*: An Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge 2009), 166.

24 Garrett, *Cognition*, 234. Robert Fogelin agrees that Hume's final position, which depends on the Title Principle and "the gross earthy mixture" associated with "honest gentlemen," "bears a heavy burden in protecting Hume from radical skepticism," but Fogelin worries that "it is not clear how (or if) it can bear this burden." *Hume's Skeptical Crisis* (New York, NY: Oxford 2009), 136. These remarks suggest that Fogelin thinks that Hume believes that he has found a way to answer or isolate the skeptic's doubts, though Fogelin officially favors a perspectival or developmental Several-Humes approach, not a Single-Hume one. I explore perspective and developmental strategies shortly.

25 Garrett objects that to insist that Hume must justify the Principle before he can deploy it is to attribute to Hume an antecedent skepticism that he rejects, a skepticism that appeals to *a priori* epistemic principles (Commentary, 37th International Hume Conference in Antwerp, Belgium, July 2010). Hume need not justify the Principle before he uses it, Garrett maintains, since the Principle survives reflective approval in which Hume employs his "epistemic sensibility." While I agree that Hume rejects the antecedent skepticism that Descartes favors (that is, skepticism that precedes *all* inquiry whatsoever), I think that such skepticism differs importantly from that associated with the dangerous dilemma. The latter arises from sober reflection on the mind's infirmities, infirmities that Hume's own science (and not *a priori* epistemic principles) reveals. This makes it a *consequent* skepticism whose pedigree gives it a significance (for him) that the Cartesian sort lacks. Given its roots in his past discoveries, and the fact that it appears to discredit all belief and reasoning, he cannot appeal to the Title Principle and a test of reflective approval to escape its extreme doubts, since to reflect on the Principle and consider whether to approve it presupposes that these doubts can be resolved or at least quarantined.

If the skepticism nonetheless depends on combining *a priori* principles with empirical findings, Garrett argues, it could still be the kind of antecedent skepticism that Hume rejects. Alternatively, if the Principle functions by combining empirical findings with "an epistemic sensibility," then "reflections that change how our sensibility responds to the empirical findings are prima facie legitimate" (Commentary, 37th International Hume Conference in Antwerp, Belgium, July 2010). Neither proposal strikes me as adequate. I share Garrett's view that Hume takes some epistemic principles for granted when constructing his dilemma, but I do not see why these principles must be *a priori*

ones, and as a result I remain unconvinced that Hume's radical skepticism is the kind of antecedent skepticism that Hume thinks can be safely set aside. The suggestion that Hume can appeal to his "epistemic sensibility" also falls short, for this sensibility involves the kinds of considerations that Garrett takes to license the Title Principle—that is, our recognition of the Principle's reliability and usefulness, etc. For Hume to appeal to such a sensibility, he must already have sufficient warrant for dismissing his radical skepticism. But if he is justified in discarding his extreme doubts, he does not need to rely on his epistemic sensibility to authorize the Title Principle so that he can then employ the Principle to discount the doubts.

26 Don Baxter, *Hume's Difficulty: Time and Identity in the* Treatise (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008). Baxter traces this distinction to the ancients and proposes that "Hume adapts the Pyrrhonian stance on belief and justification in a way that allows him to emulate Academic mitigated skeptics in matters beyond active daily life," or more succinctly, Hume is "a Pyrrhonian skeptic who emulates an Academic mitigated skeptic." Ibid., 8. This Pyrrhonism resembles the Pyrrhonism described in the *Enquiry* (which assents to nothing whatsoever) less than it resembles the historical Pyrrhonism described by Michael Frede in "The Skeptic's Two Kinds of Assent and the Question of the Possibility of Knowledge," in *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press (1987), 201–22. Frede's interpretation is, as Baxter notes, controversial. Baxter says that his account is also shaped in some ways by Richard Popkin, "David Hume: His Pyrrhonism and his Critique of Pyrrhonism," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 1.5 (1951): 395–407.

27 Don Baxter, personal correspondence, September 22, 2010.

28 Baxter's proposal is multi-dimensional but highly compressed, and its elements are not always easily disentangled. He appeals to stability, for example, to identify a "procedure" (Baxter, *Hume's Difficulty*, 11) that allows Hume to engage in science. The technique hinges upon recognizing that passive assent varies in its force and stability such that fictitious ideas, for instance, are weaker than those produced by memory or custom, and it emphasizes that ideas produced by irregular principles of reasoning are less stable than those generated by permanent and universal properties. Baxter says little about how this procedure works, though he emphasizes that stability supports a "surrogate, naturalist account of normativity and reasonableness" that allows engaging in "an analogue to theorizing, but without any attempt to get at the truth behind appearances," and that helps to explain Hume's interest "only with objects as they appear to us in experience." See CMS 13.64, 11–12. But apart from noting that the normative force of Hume's recommendations ultimately come from promoting our survival and our pleasures and minimizing our pains, Baxter does not explain this account of normativity and reasonableness or say much about theorizing or its "analogue." According to another element of Baxter's proposal, since Hume focuses on how ideas *feel*, some of his distinctions "are like aesthetic distinctions," and Hume can appeal to *metaphysical taste* to determine whether to assent to a metaphysical assumption (11, 15). Just how this is supposed to work is unclear, however, for Baxter tells us only that metaphysical taste is cultivated by "carefully weighing opposing positions and considering their consequences for empirical and mathematical science" (15–16).

Since Baxter's does not develop these ideas, fully assessing them is difficult, but as far as resolving the conflict between Hume's skepticism and his commitments goes, what we do know is enough to determine that they are not equipped for the job. For

Hume to make judgments about stability or taste, he must be able to dismiss his radical doubts, and as a result, he cannot appeal to the judgments to explain why the doubts can be discarded. If, as Baxter maintains, the doubts so bind Hume to the fully reflectively considered position that he can never discover sufficiently compelling grounds for believing anything, then Hume's deeply considered view on appeals to stability and metaphysical taste, and so on, must be that we have no suitably good basis for endorsing them. To the extent that Hume (passively) pursues them anyway, he is left with the troubling cognitive dissonance problem mentioned in the body of this paper.

29 Graciela de Pierris, "Hume's Pyrrhonian Skepticism and the Belief in Causal Laws," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 39.3 (2001): 351–83, 364. De Pierris sometimes distinguishes the two standpoints in ways that seem to indicate that she favors a multiple epistemic standards approach (that is, an approach that allows Hume to dismiss his radical doubts because they attach to norms that are inappropriate in most settings). She asserts, for example, that "[n]atural scientists and mitigated skeptics do not ask the same general questions about the justification of the whole of our knowledge as the philosopher does in a Pyrrhonian frame of mind, and they accept the teaching of certain forms of reflection while always remaining anchored to fundamental natural beliefs." Ibid., 355. But de Pierris does not take these different sets of aims and standards to provide a route for discounting radical skepticism or alleviating the tension in Hume's work. She insists that the two perspectives remain in conflict, which keeps Hume from speaking with one consistent voice.

30 Robert J. Fogelin, "Garrett on the Consistency of Hume's Philosophy," *Hume Studies* 15.1 (1998): 161–69, 163. Fogelin's most recent book continues to maintain that different Humes occupy the *Treatise*, though these Humes now take less lively names. The gentleman relaxes into the "ordinary" person, the Pyrrhonian and despairing skeptic becomes "the melancholy Hume," the wise and cautious inquirer turns into the "chastened Hume," and the hare-brained enthusiast matures into "the confident Hume." Fogelin, *Hume's Skeptical Crisis: A Textual Study* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 6–7. As I discuss shortly, Fogelin's perspectivalism has a developmental tinge, for although he thinks that Hume can switch back and forth between stances, he also holds that the different positions "arise in natural sequence." Ibid., 163.

31 Fogelin, "Consistency," 161. Anne Jaap Jacobson shows sympathy for this kind of assessment when she writes that inconsistency has "a more essential role in philosophy than we may want to think" and that we ought to "resist" looking for "one correct constructive interpretation" of Hume's text. "Writing the Philosophical Canon," in *Feminist Interpretations of Hume*, ed. Anne Jaap Jacobson (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Press, 1992), 82.

32 This sort of interpretation may be encouraged by Fogelin's claim that one Hume cannot advance a non-question-begging argument against another Hume's position. But Fogelin insists that the different Humes *can* talk about the same things, which suggests that their perspectives are not incommensurate in a way that would prevent conflict. Fogelin's defense of inconsistency additionally indicates that he thinks the different positions are at odds with one another.

33 Wayne Waxman, *Hume's Theory of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 271.

34 Popkin, "Pyrrhonism," 405. A number of Hume's readers find the conflict in the *Treatise* profoundly disturbing, though whether they agree with Yves Michaud (and possibly Popkin) that Hume oscillates wildly from one position to another is not always clear. Selby-Bigge, for example, describes the *Treatise* as "ill-proportioned, incoherent, ill-expressed." "Editor's Introduction," *Enquiry*, SBN x. Vinding Kruse takes the arguments in T 1.4.7 to produce "an inner conflict between his [Hume's] theory and practices, which is in every way intolerable." *Hume's Philosophy in His Principle Work*, trans. P. T. Federspiel (Oxford University Press, 1939), 31. According to Passmore, "Hume lapses into inconsistencies of the most startling character" (*Hume's Intentions*, 133), while Antony Flew calls the inconsistency between Hume's extreme skepticism and his science "flagrant and fundamental." *David Hume: Philosopher of Moral Science* (New York, NY: Blackwell, 1986), 119. Millican believes that Hume finds himself in such a morass that he significantly recasts his position in the first *Enquiry*. "The Context, Aims, and Structure of Hume's First *Enquiry*," in *Reading Hume on Human Understanding: Essays on the First Enquiry*, ed. Peter Millican (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 27–66.