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Hume's Objects After Deleuze

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The skeptical challenge of David Hume in the 18th Century presented a shock to existing dogmatic thinking in philosophy. In challenging long-held and fundamental beliefs about the nature of causation and the external world, Hume would be categorized as a radical skeptic and anti-realist by his contemporaries and Immanuel Kant later on. However, renewed debate over these historical interpretations of Hume has emerged, and those under the New Hume banner argue that Hume held a realist position. However, all of these interpretations are not without their issues. In this thesis, I show that the historical readings of Hume misjudge the level of skepticism at work in his philosophy. Further, I exhibit that the New Hume interpretations are not without issues. I argue that the No-Single Hume position ends in contradiction, while the Skeptical Realist, although strong, falls into the very same epistemological debates it wishes to free itself from. Even more problematic, the Skeptical Realist is open to a paradox on the basis of the strike to the senses that takes place in the formation of impressions. To remedy this, I claim that the strike is specifically an interaction of two external limits. From this reading, I propose a possible ontological reading of Hume by utilizing the concepts of atomism and associationism deployed in Gilles Deleuze's work Empiricism and Subjectivity. This reading serves a double function as it lends an ontological rendering of Hume to the Skeptical Realists while endorsing realist readings of Deleuze.

INTRODUCTION

One of the hallmarks of Gilles Deleuze's corpus was his ability to re-animate the corpses of philosophers past, to form a new emergent body with those who had simply become parts of the "history of philosophy." These emergent bodies harbor renewed affections, a multiplying effect that produces a new encounter with Bergson, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, and others. New encounters bring about new relations, new emergent bodies, and forces of creativity. The first instance of this emerges in *Empiricism and Subjectivity,*[1] where Deleuze poses the question, "how does the mind become a subject?"[2] What undergirds this question within Hume's oeuvre is precisely, "how does a collection become a system?"[3] In which ways do individuated and free-floating units come to form a system? I will return to these questions later, but their mere positing remains imperative for understanding how the Deleuze-Hume encounter charters a different course for Hume's ontology than found in current or past readings Hume.

At times the history of philosophy is like that of a rock formation. Layers upon layers of sediment harden to form a mass, layers upon layers of interpretation result in an inheritance or caricatures of figures that have long since passed. Since Kant's famous quote that Hume had "…interrupted my dogmatic slumber,"[4] we have inherited a Hume who maintained not only a radical skepticism concerning causation but also one that believed our knowledge about the world around us could only be *a posteriori*. In centering the discussion on Hume's would-be epistemology, Kant effectively forms a layer of sediment over Hume's works themselves. The

[1] From here on this text will be abbreviated as ES.
[2] Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, trans. Constantin Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 23.
[3] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 23.
[4] See Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science,* trans. Gary Hatfield (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 10.

formation left behind has no alternative but to be anti-realist about causation and objects in the world. If all that one can know is what is given in experience, then one cannot or at least *reliably* cannot make assertions about anything that exists beyond that experience. This traditional reading of Hume has undergone some excavation which has culminated in the recent New Hume Debate.

Current Hume studies have begun to drill through the inherited rock formation to locate what Hume's stances are regarding causation and the outside world. Among those involved in the New Hume Debate, two interpretations are dominant. One is the "No-Single Hume" interpretations wherein Hume adopts a perspectivalist approach to knowledge and the outside world. For Fogelin and others in this camp, there are several Humes that exist in his corpus. The "Gentlemanly Hume" engaged in general affairs whose thought goes very little beyond objects encountered in everyday activity.[5] The "Wise Hume" who is the cautious enquirer who extends his thought to find there is never anything present to the mind besides impressions and ideas. There is a third Hume, the "Pyrrhonian Hume," who "applies the same negative epistemic evaluations to the wise Hume that the wise Hume applied to the gentlemanly Hume."[6] For Fogelin, Hume occupies all three of these positions with complete commitment.

The second interpretation in the New Hume Debate views Hume as a skeptical realist. Much of this interpretation stems from Galen Strawson's work, which claims that Hume holds a realist position concerning causation and objects in the world but recognizes that human beings are epistemologically limited in their knowledge of these matters. Strawson and others who adhere to this interpretation place a much lighter emphasis on the skepticism that is present in

[5] See Fogelin, Robert. "Garrett on the Consistency of Hume's Philosophy." *Hume Studies* 24, no. 1 (April 1998): 161-169. DOI: 10.1353/hms.2011.0103.
[6] Fogelin, "Garrett on the Consistency of Hume's Philosophy," 164.

Hume's works. Much more detail is needed here and will be present in the forthcoming chapters, but the New Hume Debate's broad concerns remain rooted in epistemology and branch out to the outside world from there.

Through the several interpretations presented, the realism vs. anti-realism question remains somewhat open-ended. At first glance, Deleuze's interpretation of Hume does not directly answer the realism question emphatically, leading scholars like Jeffrey Bell to claim that *Empiricism and Subjectivity* flows from a space between realism and anti-realism.[7] While the caricature inherited from Kant portrays Hume in an anti-realist light due to its focus on the epistemological limits that seem to exist from Hume's claims about causality, the recent New Hume Debate attempts to rescue Hume from anti-realism. However, it remains trapped amidst the layers of sediment inherited from Kant. What is gained through the excavation efforts of Fogelin and Strawson presents us with an opportunity for a new encounter with Hume as a realist; Deleuze's central question "what makes a collection a system?"[8] provides us with a thread to follow to reconstruct a rendering of Hume's ontological realism.

The course for this encounter unfolds through two chapters. The first chapter will focus on the inherited anti-realist view of Hume from Kant. The focus will turn to New Hume Debate, which attempts to rescue Hume's philosophy from the anti-realist fate. This chapter will be broken into three main sections; the first section will focus on returning to the initial layer of sediment formed from Kant's reading of Hume. Here, I will explore the central issue in Kant's reading of Hume which stems from a hasty reading of Hume's views on causality and

[7] See Bell, Jeffrey. "Between Realism and Anti-realism: Deleuze and the Spinozist Tradition in Philosophy." *Deleuze Studies* 5, no. 1 (2011): 1-17. DOI: 10.3366/dls.2011.0002.
[8] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 23.

succession. From there, I will discuss the New Hume Debate, focusing mainly on the limits and lack of ontological description that this view can provide.

The second chapter will also unfold in three additional sections. First, I will track Deleuze's answer to the question of how a collection becomes a system via an ontological rendering of the two primary poles he finds at work in Hume. To be brief, this is Hume's atomism (the collection of free-floating ideas in the mind) and associationism (the imagination's way of organizing and mobilizing these ideas into habits, beliefs, and actions). However, a gap seemingly still exists in grounding Deleuze's productive and creative view of Hume firmly in the realist camp. The second section will focus on this gap which stems from a missed encounter with Hume's description of the origin of impressions. Here I will focus on Hume's usage of the distinction between impressions and ideas stemming from a difference in force. Thus, I will argue what takes place in the formation of an impression, or an idea is a gradation in force. As Hume notes in the *Treatise*, "The difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and liveliness with which they strike upon the mind, our ideas and make their way into our thought or consciousness."[9] The continual return to tactile language and the importance of the strike to the impressions will be vital in delineating the Deleuze-Hume encounter as one that is realist in nature. Lastly, I will conclude the chapter by pulling these lines together and provide a view of Hume's realist ontology that conforms to his moderate skepticism regarding our knowledge of the outside world.

To conclude, I will show how this new encounter with Hume produces a radically new view of objects in Hume's philosophy. From this encounter, we see Deleuze-Hume emergent

[9] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* ed. David Norton & Mary Norton, (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1.

body provides us with a starting point for not only a stronger realist Hume but also will make Hume a central thread in recent speculative realist readings of Deleuze. While Hume remains a caricature within continental philosophy, I believe that Deleuze's encounter with Hume can help produce a new Hume encounter with those who may have forgotten him.

REALIST AND ANTI-REALIST INTERPRETATIONS OF HUME

Introduction

A significant mark of the transition from medieval and scholastic philosophy to Renaissance and early modern philosophy in the West was the challenge of the skeptic. Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), and David Hume (1711-1776) each represent a different form of the skeptical challenge to scholastic orthodoxy. However, of these three figures, David Hume would come to define what Kenneth Stunkel refers to as the "secular modernism of the eighteenth century."[10] By defining this new model of secular modernism, a space would be opened for the replacement of the scholastic notion of God as creator of all to the modern position which privileged the human being and the power of reason. Despite this, Hume's role in the history of western philosophy has been reduced and treated as a bridge to the thought of Immanuel Kant. When Hume's empiricism and skepticism is treated as a mere path to Kant's transcendental idealism, much of what Hume has to say about the world and our interactions with it have become diluted. While Hume's skeptical challenge plays an important role in his works, it does not serve a radical role in his philosophy. To be specific, the skeptical challenge serves to break up dogmatic thought and set specific constraints as to what is accessible to human knowledge. The real force of Hume's philosophy is what flows from those constraints a more limited human subjectivity, an early argument against the notion of God as creator and the privileged status of the subject. However, traditional interpretations of Hume from Scottish Common Sense Philosophers[11] to Kant himself inflated Hume's skepticism about causality and

[10] Kenneth Stunkel, "Montaigne, Bayle, and Hume: Historical dynamics of skepticism," *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 3, no. 4 (1998): 44, DOI: 10.1080/10848779808579899.

[11] These philosophers were among the first critics of Hume's philosophy. See: James Beattie, Thomas Reid and James Oswald.

even the world outside of human experience to the point of anti-realism. In the 20th and 21st centuries, there has been a move to reexamine Hume's works in light of these claims. As was mentioned earlier, many of the scholars working within the New Hume debate not only argue that Hume was far from a radical skeptic, but he was also firmly in the realist camp.

In order to lay the groundwork for a Deleuzean-influenced skeptical realist Hume, we first need to return to the traditional interpretation of Hume that was inherited from not only Kant but also the Common Sense philosophers as well. By traversing through these interpretations and noting where they misunderstand Hume, a site can be formed wherein a new encounter with Hume can be created. From this point, the focus can be turned toward the New Hume debate that seeks to rescue Hume's work from the assertions of anti-realism and radical skepticism. However, I will show that these New Hume interpretations focus entirely too much on epistemological concerns without wading into Hume's ontology itself.

Common Sense Philosophers

Traditional interpretations of Hume can be traced back to two important sources. Chronologically, these are the interpretations of the Common Sense philosophers and Immanuel Kant. Scotland's Common Sense philosophy had its beginnings in the early 18th Century and maintained a close relationship with the Church of Scotland. While the Church of Scotland itself saw Hume as an infidel,[12] the main thinkers of the Common Sense school remained on friendly terms with Hume but maintained their opposition. The central thinkers of the Common Sense school were James Beattie, Thomas Reid, and James Oswald, each aiding in the popularization

[12] See Ardley, Gavin. "Hume's Common Sense Critics." *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 30, no. 115/116 (1976): 104-125. JSTOR.

of the anti-realist view of Hume's works. The works of the Common Sense school would lead to the consideration that Hume "is more a subjective idealist than even Berkeley, and so thorough a sceptic that he denounces all belief in permanence, in identity, in activity, whether in a self or outside it, as fiction and illusion."[13] Further, this "…interpretation of Hume's teaching which first gained general currency through the writings of Thomas Reid, Beattie and Dugald Stewart, and which was later accepted, almost without question, by James Mill, John Stuart Mill and Bain."[14] Although Immanuel Kant would forcefully disagree with the main findings of the Scottish Common Sense school, their initial interpretations of Hume would continue to hold sway over Kant's interpretation of Hume's works.[15]

The question then becomes how and why the Common Sense philosophers attained such a misreading of Hume. As Kemp Smith explains, the Common Sense view of Hume stems from the particular assumption that Hume views the "…common-sense belief in external bodies and in the self as fictitious and illusory."[16] Of the several Common Sense philosophers, it would appear that Reid was the much more concise and philosophical member of the school, so while the other members of the school held similar objections to Hume, it is Reid's that managed to retain their strength.[17] In Reid's *Inquiry into the Human Mind*, the charges against Hume are on full display. Reid explicitly levels the charge of anti-realism by stating the following, "But when

[13] Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 80.
[14] Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume*, 80.
[15] There has been much debate over the extent of access that Kant had to Hume's works themselves, more discussion will be needed in the next paragraph.
[16] Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume*, 81.
[17] As Gavin Ardley writes, "Thomas Reid was a very much more thoughtful philosopher than James Beattie. Whereas Beattie was content to assert the passionate convictions of the heart as against Hume's dissolving scepticism, Reid determined to sift the matter to the bottom in a judicial spirit." See Ardley, "Hume's Common Sense Critics," 116.

I look into myself and consider the mind that makes me capable of all these views and pleasures, if it is indeed what the Treatise of Human Nature says it is then it turns out that I have merely been in an enchanted castle, deceived by spectres and apparitions."[18] For Reid, Hume tears down the last line of defense between radical skepticism and the doubt that Descartes puts forward in the meditations. In this sense, Hume is wholly committed to representational thinking as Reid explains, "Human beings don't and can't think of anything except the operations of their own minds."[19] What is troubling here is that for Reid, Hume appears to fall entirely into an absolute form of representational thinking. Given that our sense perceptions form ideas and become organized within the imagination, it would seem at a glance that we become trapped in a world of idea.

For Reid, we must not accept representational thinking of this sort. Reid firmly falls on the realist side of things as he is firmly in favor of direct perception. Reid writes, "When I perceive a tree in front of me, my faculty of seeing gives me not only a notion or simple apprehension of the tree, but a belief in its existence, its shape, its distance and its size; and this judgment or belief is not acquired by comparing ideas—it is included in the very nature of the perception."[20] What central in Reid's notion of perception is that rather than a bundle of qualities that become formed in the mind through the operation of the imagination, we instead take in the whole of the appearance as well as the grounded justification for the existence of the object perceived. In Reid's estimation, this is a damning rebuttal to Hume's alleged anti-realism.

[18] Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind: On the Principles of Common Sense* (Edinburgh, UK: J. Robertson, 1818), 38.
[19] Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*, 394.
[20] Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*, 394.

However, it would seem that Reid slightly mistakes the level of skepticism that is present in Hume's works. While Hume's skepticism becomes explicitly more weakened in the *Enquiry,* the beginnings of this are evident in the earlier *Treatise.* Hume writes:

> Thus to resume what I have said concerning the senses; they give us no notion of continu'd existence, because they cannot operate beyond the extent, in which they really operate. They as little produce the opinion of a distinct existence, because they neither can offer it to the mind as represented, nor as original. To offer it as represented, they must present both an object and an image.[21]

What Hume presents in the quote above is something less than radical skepticism. At face value, it appears that Hume is falling into the anti-realist trap, but on the contrary, Hume is explicitly providing a distinction between "continu'd existence" and "distinct existence". In both cases, our knowledge cannot transcend the limits of perception, but it does not imply that there is no external object. Hume mentions as much earlier in the text when he writes, "We may well ask, What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body? but 'tis in vain to ask, Whether there be body or not? That is a point, which we must take for granted in all our reasonings."[22] The question then becomes, how can one take for granted the existence of a body/object when the very existence of such things lies beyond our access? The answer is not as puzzling as it may seem, as it boils down to a matter of epistemic access rather than a claim about reality itself. Hume is even more explicit about this in the *Enquiry* when he explains, "…nature has kept us at a great distance from all her secrets, and has afforded us only the knowledge of a few superficial qualities of objects; while she conceals from us those powers and principles, on which the influence of these objects entirely depends."[23] From the points made in the *Treatise,* one can

[21] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 128.
[22] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 125.
[23] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Millican, (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 24.

have an idea of the outside world but only on the basis of our impressions and their corresponding ideas. However, this is not due to being trapped in the mind as nature *itself* remains veiled and unavailable to our access. Our lack of access is not epistemological but ontological; nature itself withholds its powers.

Kant

Moving from Reid's interpretation to Kant's, we are at the center of the traditional or anti-realist interpretation of Hume. Although Kant lambasts the Common Sense philosophers early in *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics,* his interpretation of Hume does not deviate from that of Reid or others who were the original critics of Hume's works. In reference to the Reid, Kant writes, "One cannot, without feeling a certain pain, behold how utterly and completely his opponents, Reid, Oswald, Beattie, and finally Priestley, missed the point of his problem, and misjudged his hints for improvement – constantly taking for granted just what he doubted…"[24] While Kant is certainly correct in his statements regarding the Common Sense philosophers and their misinterpretation of Hume's works as was just shown in the previous section, there has been much debate over the extent of which Kant himself knew these works. Thus, a brief detour through the implications of this debate must take priority. Following this detour, the real matter at hand will be returned to which will center around Kant's reading of Hume's position on causality.

Robert Paul-Wolff's article titled "Kant's Debt to Hume Via Beattie" puts forward the thesis that Kant could not have had contact with the entirety of Hume's *Treatise* prior to his writing of the First *Critique* (1781) or the *Prolegomena* (1783). Wolff traces this back to two

[24] Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics,* 8.

distinct factors. The first is that Kant himself did not understand English. Wolff notes, "…Jachman, a contemporary of Kant, says that "of the modern languages, Kant understood French."[25] Given that Kant did not have a grasp of the English language, it is unlikely that he would have had the full arguments of Hume's *Treatise* at his disposal. Due to this, there were three possible sources from which Kant could have drawn from in order to garner his understanding of Hume's works. The first would have been a four-volume translation of Hume's essays that were produced from 1752-1754. Included in the second volume of these essays would be Hume's two *Enquiries* but no the *Treatise.* Second would have been the German translation of James Beattie's *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of the Truth*. Beattie, a member of the Common Sense school, quoted from Hume's *Treatise* at length which could provide insight into Kant's understanding of the *Treatise* itself. Last, a few months before Kant completed the first *Critique,* two translations of Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* were published in German. The major thrust of Wolff's thesis is that Kant would have been forced to rely on the lengthy quotations used by Beattie in his text. In verifying the references that Kant makes to the *Treatise*, Wolff notes that all of the passages had been present in the Beattie translation.[26] Thus, Wolff concludes that while Kant may have been familiar with Hume's works, he would not have known the *Treatise.*

Through this detour, a compelling case can be made that Kant had no direct access to the numerous arguments in the *Treatise.* For Wolff, this is particularly apparent in that Kant begins his discussion of Hume by stating that Hume begins with Cause and Effect.[27] While Kant

[25] Robert Wolff, "Kant's Debt to Hume Via Beattie," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 21, no. 1 (1960): 123, JSTOR.
[26] Wolff, "Kant's Debt to Hume Via Beattie," 122.
[27] Wolff, "Kant's Debt to Hume Via Beattie," 123. Also see, Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, 7.

rebukes the Common Sense philosophers by stating they missed the point of Hume's enterprise, however, his interpretation of Hume is nonetheless tinted by Beattie's interpretation of Hume. Given that the interest of this work centers around Hume's views on objects and Hume's ontology, we are provided only a few passages in Kant that can be linked to these topics. In a long passage from the *Prolegomena,* Kant states the following:

> So I tried first whether Hume's objection might not be presented in a general manner, and I soon found that the concept of the connection of cause and effect is far from being the only concept through which the understanding thinks connections of things a priori; rather, metaphysics consists wholly of such concepts. I sought to ascertain their number, and as I had successfully attained this in the way I wished, namely from a single principle, I proceeded to the deduction of these concepts, from which I henceforth became assured that they were not, as Hume had feared, derived from experience, but had arisen from the pure understanding.[28]

From Kant's reading of Hume in the quoted passage, the issue that Hume raises is slightly different from that of the *Treatise.* For Kant, Hume's objection to the notion of cause and effect entirely stems from the fact that any notion of cause is rendered through a concept. Hume's famous example of the billiard balls in the *Treatise* can serve as a vehicle for understanding what Kant is aiming at and what he is misled on. In the Abstract of the *Treatise,* Hume gives an extended explanation of how one cannot discern cause and effect from the interaction of billiard balls. Hume notes three integral things at work in the strike of two billiard balls. The first is Contiguity, which is the lack of interval between the two objects and the subsequent motion.[29] Priority follows as Hume notes, "Priority in time is therefore another requisite circumstance in every cause."[30] The third is constant conjunction, which is the conjunction between the two objects organized by the imagination to produce the notion of cause and effect. Thus for Hume, there is nothing outside of

[28] Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics,* 10.
[29] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 409.
[30] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 409.

these three instances that can register as a cause. As Hume explains, "This is the case when both the cause and effect are present to the senses."[31] Much like the example discussed in Reid's interpretation of Hume, what one discerns as cause and effect is only what is present to the senses; the actual reality of cause and effect is barred from the one doing the perceiving. Further, pointing back to the famous line from Hume's *Enquiry,* "…nature has kept us at a great distance from all her secrets, and has afforded us only the knowledge of a few superficial qualities of objects; while she conceals from us those powers and principles, on which the influence of these objects entirely depends."[32] It can be granted that Hume's own view of his works were centered in something much more realist although we cannot have direct access to the real itself.

Through the detour into the historical conditions under which Kant would have had access to Hume's works and interrogating his reading of Hume, it can be discerned that the interpretation of Hume that has been inherited from Kant is not entirely accurate. Furthermore, considering that Kant's access to Hume's writings hinges significantly on quotations from Beattie, we can see that Kant's anti-realist interpretation of Hume is at the very least tinted by anti-realist interpretations that stem from the Common Sense philosophers. Having cleared the ground of the anti-realist interpretations of Hume, it is now time to move forward into what has been dubbed as the New Hume debate. In the following section, I will pay special attention to two distinct legs of the New Hume debate. While all New Humeans understand Hume to be a realist, some understand Hume as embodying multiple perspectives throughout his works and others that interpret Hume as holding a singular voice throughout his works. Special attention will be paid to the works of Robert Fogelin (No-single Hume) and Galen Strawson (Singular Voiced Hume).

[31] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 409.
[32] Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 24.

No-Single Hume

Considering the New Hume debate's various interpretations, one of the most impactful has been what Jani Hakkarainen refers to as the "no-single Hume" interpretation.[33] Within the current of this interpretation, we find three specific figures, Richard Popkin, Robert Fogelin, and Donald Baxter. The no-single Hume interpreters rally around the notion that several voices of Hume are present within his writings. Looking at the following quote from the conclusion of the *Treatise* can shed some light:

> Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hour's amusement, I wou'd return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther.[34]

In the above passage, we find Hume reflecting on an exit from his philosophical or skeptical delirium. There is a seemingly simple passage from the radically skeptical Hume into the backgammon playing and social Hume. For no-single Hume interpreters, this is a sign that there are multiple Humes at work within Hume's corpus. These multiple Humes allow for Hume to escape the possibility of self-contradiction. On the one hand, the natural Hume of everyday life has a belief in causation and the outside world due to it being a necessary habit in order to navigate the world around him. On the other hand, the philosopher Hume can release himself from the

[33] Jani Hakkarainen, "Hume's Scepticism and Realism," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 20, no. 2 (2012): 297, DOI: 10.1080/09608788.2012.664024.
[34] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 175.

judgment that the very objects he encounters in the world are reality itself. Much of this interpretation tied into Pyrrhonian skepticism, as Hakkarainen describes, "In their lives, the ancient Pyrrhonists followed nature in the form of appearances – what seemed to them to be the case – but suspended judgement on the question of how things really are."[35] Given that the different Humes hold skeptical and realist beliefs at different periods, they escape from the contradiction that P is both true and not true at the same time.

While Popkin and Baxter hold similar no-single Hume interpretations, Fogelin's version of the no-single Hume position shows to be the strongest in that he locates three separate Hume voices throughout Hume's works. Fogelin notes that throughout Hume's writings, there are a variety of cognitive perspectives that he embodies. [36] To sum, there is the gentlemanly Hume, the wise Hume, and the Pyrrhonian Hume. Each voice of Hume works amongst the others. Fogelin explains it as such:

> "The wise Hume, having entered upon the science of man, comes to believe that a very wide range of the gentlemanly Hume's beliefs are either false or unfounded. Indeed, to the wise Hume, the beliefs of the gentlemanly Hume are massively (thought sometimes beneficially) skewed. The Pyrrhonian Hume emerges from the wise Hume when the wise Hume pursues the science of man in a wholly unrestricted manner. The Pyrrhonian emerges from the wise Hume simply by doing what the wise Hume does, only more so."[37]

We can imagine Fogelin's Humes to function much like a traffic signal. Green at the level of taking the outside world and causation for granted while playing backgammon. The light changes yellow when the wise Hume comes to question that the beliefs of the first Hume are unfounded or possibly even erroneous as far as what sense data is available at the time. The red and last light change occurs when the Pyrrhonian Hume becomes present in that this Hume applies even more negative

[35] Hakkarainen, "Hume's Scepticism and Realism," 298.
[36] Fogelin, "Garrett on the Consistency of Hume's Philosophy," 163.
[37] Fogelin, "Garrett on the Consistency of Hume's Philosophy," 163-164.

epistemic evaluations to that of the wise Hume. The final Hume is suffering from philosophical delirium in the closing pages of the *Treatise.*

To understand fully what this interpretation entails, a deeper dive into the three Humes is necessary. To begin with the first, the gentlemanly Hume is the natural Hume of everyday life. This is the Hume that ventures out into the world and does not doubt that the person or object he is interacting with is real. The epistemic concerns over the certainty of his interactions with the real do not crop up while involved in this everyday life. This Hume can grab hold of a cup and not be the slightest bit bothered by the question of whether if this is the cup *itself* or just some sensory profile of it. For Fogelin, this gentlemanly Hume is exemplified by the following passage in the *Treatise,* "Hence the colour, taste, figure, solidity, and other qualities, combin'd in a peach or melon, are conceiv'd to form one thing; and that on account of their close relation, which makes them affect the thought in the same manner, as if perfectly uncompounded."[38] Here, the gentlemanly Hume remains fully present in the belief that the peach or melon he is experiencing not only has a unified sensory profile but also that he is interacting and experiencing the fruit as it is in itself.

However, the emergence of the second or wise Hume is close at hand. This second Hume takes his experience with the unified and real fruit object under further inspection and applies a certain amount of skepticism to the experience of the first Hume. Fogelin highlights that this statement follows directly from our last quoted passage from the *Treatise:*

> But the mind rests not here. Whenever it views the object in another light, it finds that all these qualities are different, and distinguishable, and separable from each other; which view of things being destructive of its primary and more natural notions, obliges the imagination to feign an unknown something, or original substance and matter, as a principle of union or cohesion among these qualities, and

[38] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 146.

> as what may give the compound object a title to be call'd one thing, notwithstanding its diversity and composition.[39]

Here, the wise Hume has emerged and, in doing so, has called the beliefs of the gentlemanly Hume into question. The Hume that was previously enjoying a piece of fruit in the real is no longer. Instead, the wise Hume raised the skeptical objection to the external and unified sensual fruit by recognizing that each quality of the fruit itself is distinguishable and separable from the last. To go even further, the wise Hume realizes that the sensual experience that he is having is not in fact with the peach or melon itself but instead that the sensual qualities of the fruit have produced an impression which then are copied as ideas and organized by the imagination to form the what the gentlemanly Hume would believe is the fruit as it stands in reality. Thus, what can be known for the wise Hume is *only* a veiled form of the fruit that is exposed via the senses.

However, this is not the end of the cycle as even the wise Hume will be subjected to additional epistemic doubts. This is what Fogelin deems as his Pyrrhonian Hume; this is a Hume of radical skepticism that realizes that he unsure of everything. Fogelin cites the following passage from the *Treatise,* "The intense view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another."[40] This is the Hume who locked in his study through intense reflection realizes that reliance on human reason is so flimsy for making sense of the outside world that it should be rejected in full, and any belief about external objects and causation should go with it.

The relationships amongst the various Humes must be cyclical like that of a traffic signal. At the height of his skepticism about the world, the final Pyrrhonian Hume quickly follows up that

[39] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 146.
[40] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 175.

passage by exclaiming that this state leaves him in a state of dire existential dread. He begins to question where or what he is, from what cause he derives his existence, and so on.[41] The cycle of the traffic light then turns, and the gentlemanly Hume returns to look upon the Pyrrhonian Hume hunched over the desk in his study as a lunatic. As veiled as always, nature returns to the obliterated Pyrrhonian Hume and resuscitates him to play backgammon once again.

Fogelin provides a fascinating and invigorating interpretation of Hume's works, but it is not without problems. The first issue that stands out in Fogelin's interpretation is the claim that Hume embodies all three positions as separate positions throughout his works in order to avoid contradiction. Although Fogelin provides distinct names for the various Humes, a question must be raised as to whether this is a sliding scale of the same Hume that moves back and forth through the three positions. Returning to the conclusion of the *Treatise,* Hume writes:

> "At the time, therefore, that I am tir'd with amusement and company, and have indulg'd a reverie in my chamber, or in a solitary walk by a river-side, I feel my mind all collected within itself, and am naturally inclin'd to carry my view into all those subjects, about which I have met with so many disputes in the course of my reading and conversation."[42]

What Hume is stating in the quoted passage is not that there is a direct changing of his mindset when it comes to the matter of causality and the external world, but rather if we are to accept Fogelin's thesis, there would be various levels of gradation that allow Hume to move back and forth between these positions. While the levels of gradation would seem to still allow for Fogelin's position to remain acceptable, Hume deals it an injurious blow in that it is the "…flattest of all contradictions, viz. that 'tis possible for the same thing both to be and not to be."[43]

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[41] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 175.
[42] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 176.
[43] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 18.

Supposing that we take Fogelin's triple Hume for granted as separate individuals rather than a sliding scale, a second issue still arises. This issue stems from the way in which the Pyrrhonian Hume ends. Returning to the quote from earlier, Hume explains, "…that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another."[44] If this is the ending point of the traffic light Hume, then Hume embodies no final position after all of the work expended throughout the *Treatise.*[45] Ultimately, the tripod Hume interpretation falls somewhat flat if Hume's entire philosophical work simply ends in trapped in Pyrrhonian skepticism.

Skeptical Realism

Focus can turn to the skeptical realist position within the New Hume debate. The prominent adherents to this view of Hume are Janet Broughton, Galen Strawson, and John Wright. Broadly speaking, all three adhere to the notion that Hume remains a skeptical realist regarding causation and the external world. Thus for the skeptical realist, Hume fully invests in the existence of the outside world and causation, similar to the gentlemanly Hume we discussed earlier, but remains fully skeptical as to our epistemic access to reality itself through the senses. As Kenneth Richman explains in the *New Hume Debate*, "…defenders of the New Hume interpretation either understand Hume's theory of ideas to be limited in scope (that is, to apply to less than the entire range of our beliefs, ideas and terms) or to be limited in force (that is, to say of ideas or terms that are not derived from previous impressions something less strong than that they are meaningless and hence

[44] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 175.
[45] See Hakkarainen, "Hume's Scepticism and Realism," 299.

useless), or both."[46] Thus, while the defenders of the New Hume interpretation do not hold the same position, they all agree that Hume's skepticism remains certainly more restrained and far from the radical skepticism put forward by Fogelin or the anti-realism found in Reid and Kant.

Of the skeptical realist position's defenders, Galen Strawson has made significant progress in moving this interpretation of Hume forward. In "David Hume: Objects and Power," Strawson directs the reader almost immediately to the following quote in the *Enquiry*:

> "Most of the principles, and reasonings, contained in this volume, were published in a work in three volumes, called A Treatise of Human Nature: a work which the author projected before he left college, and which he wrote and published not long after. But not finding it successful, he was sensible of his error in going to the press too early, and he cast the whole anew in the following pieces, where some negligences in his former reasoning and more in the expression, are, he hopes, corrected. Yet several writers, who have honoured the author's philosophy with answers, have taken care to direct all their batteries against the juvenile work, which the author never acknowledged, and have affected to triumph in any advantages, which, they imagined, they had obtained over it: a practice very contrary to all rules of candour and fair- dealing, and a strong instance of those polemical artifices, which a bigotted zeal thinks itself authorized to employ. Henceforth, the author desires, that the following pieces may alone be regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments and principles."[47]

For Strawson, Hume's strong language in the Advertisement to the *Enquiry* evinces something more than walking back the youthful exuberance with which he wrote the *Treatise*. Specifically, Hume felt a sense of injury over how the Treatise had been interpreted. Thus, his response was to write the Enquiry to counteract the public misinterpretation of his youthful work.[48] In following Hume's directive in the above passage, it becomes clear for Strawson that if anyone is to read the

[46] Kenneth Richman, "Introduction," in *The New Hume Debate*, ed. Rupert Read & Kenneth Richman, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 2-3.
[47] Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 2.
[48] Galen Strawson, "David Hume: Objects and power," in *The New Hume Debate*, ed. Rupert Read & Kenneth Richman, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 31.

Treatise that the *Enquiry* must be read first and take supremacy in matters of interpretation if an issue were to arise. Hume must be read backward.

According to Strawson, beyond failing to heed Hume's request that one start with the *Enquiry,* Hume's traditional interpreters make an even bigger mistake in failing to separate Hume's ontological notions from his epistemological notions. Many of the traditional interpreters of Hume maintain that he held a regularity theory of causation, meaning that causes are followed by their effects. To explain a bit further, if we take Hume's billiard ball example wherein one ball hits another, we can form a regularity notion of causation. One ball collides with the other, the first ball hitting the second is the cause, and the second ball rolling across the felt of the pool table is the effect. If we try this again and a similar thing happens, then we can have an idea that the first ball hitting the second caused the second ball to roll. What Strawson wants to point out is that the interpreters who hold this view mistake the epistemological notion of succession for an ontological one.[49] Thus, while Hume indeed maintains the epistemological belief that all we can *know* is succession in terms of causation, he does not believe that this is equally an ontological truth.

Strawson provides a strong argument about the slippage that occurs with the traditional Hume interpretation and how the epistemological and ontological notions become confused. In "Objects and Power," Strawson notes two claims; one, the epistemological "All we can know of causation is succession," and two, the ontological "All that causation is, in the objects is succession."[50] Further, in the *Treatise,* it appears that Hume slides from the epistemological claim to the ontological claim via the semantic claim, "All we can legitimately manage to mean by

[49] Strawson, "David Hume: Objects and power," 33.
[50] Strawson, "David Hume: Objects and power," 45.

expressions like 'causation in the objects' is regular succession."[51] Strawson raises a doubt to this claim through the following passage:

> Suppose there were good grounds for thinking that Hume's theory of ideas did license the (very strange) move from (E) to (O) via (S), and hence licensed the claim that all we can suppose a thing to be is what we can detect or experience or know of it, simply because we cannot manage to mean anything more than what we can detect or experience or know of it, when we think or talk about it. Even if this were so, the following decisive objection to attributing (O) to Hume would remain: (O), the claim that causation is definitely nothing but regular succession, and that there is definitely no such thing as Causation, makes a positive ontological assertion about the ultimate nature of reality. It is therefore violently at odds with Hume's scepticism—his scepticism with respect to knowledge claims about what we can know to exist, or know not to exist, in reality.[52]

In the quoted passage, Strawson makes a strong argument against the anti-realist Hume interpretation. If one were to arrive at the definitive ontological claim that all causality is mere succession, one is making a knowledge claim about the outside world. This is a claim in which, given Hume's insistence that one cannot transcend experience to have a true understanding of the outside world, cannot be made without a significant contradiction. With this point in mind, it logically follows that if positive claims about the outside world cannot be made, then the same must apply to negative claims. Thus, Hume cannot also claim without contradiction that causation or objects themselves does not exist.

While Strawson's claim certainly bolsters the skeptical side of Hume concerning causation and external objects, it is not entirely clear how one can discern a realist position from Hume. However, for Strawson, what is at work in Hume is a belief in the outside world. Strawson writes, "…a knowledge claim is ruled out by his scepticism. The belief that there is some such thing as Causation is not ruled out, however. Scepticism can acknowledge the naturalness of this belief,

[51] Strawson, "David Hume: Objects and power," 33.
[52] Strawson, "David Hume: Objects and power," 34.

and grant that it may well be something like the truth; it will merely insist that although we believe it, *we cannot prove it to be true."*[53] Strawson's claim is further evidenced by Hume in the *Enquiry,* "The scenes of the universe are continually shifting, and one object follows another in an uninterrupted succession; but the power or force, which actuates the whole machine, is entirely concealed from us…"[54] Thus, succession is a matter of appearance, a sensory experience in which one can garner a *belief* in how reality is but not one in which reality itself can be known. Some essential boxes are checked because of this point. Hume remains an empiricist in that all one can truly *know* is what appears to our senses. This does not nullify the existence of something that undergirds what our sensory experience relays. Nor does it delimit the notion that from these sensory experiences that we form beliefs about reality as it is in itself. However, as a good skeptic, Hume is forced to doubt these very conclusions remain the same always and forever.

Given that knowledge of causation is so limited, it follows that interactions with external objects function in a similar manner. Strawson explains that since ideas of external objects are derived from impressions, what is represented in the mind can never be a genuine representation of how that object exists in reality.[55] Since Hume maintains that it is "…impossible for us so much as to conceive or form an idea of anything *specifically different* from ideas and impressions."[56] This puzzling passage seems to grant that we cannot conceive of any idea of an external object, which forces Hume into a position of idealism. Hume's solution to this issue that Strawson highlights is provided only a few lines later in the *Treatise* where Hume writes, "The farthest we can go towards a conception of external objects, when suppos'd specifically different from our

[53] Strawson, "David Hume: Objects and power," 34. Italics are my own.
[54] Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 47.
[55] Strawson, "David Hume: Objects and power," 36.
[56] Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 49.

perceptions, is to form a relative idea of them, without pretending to comprehend the related objects."[57] This shows that one can form a relative idea about the existence of external objects. However, it remains either true or not true but the "supposition—and natural belief—that there are external objects is intelligible, and hence meaningful. Hume himself takes it that it is true, for the belief that it is true is part of natural belief."[58] At the same time, Hume believed, "we are deluded if we think we have any sort of complete, adequate, accurate, precise, perfect, philosophical, tight, certain, distinct, legitimately sense-based conception of external objects (or Causation)."[59] Strawson's depiction of Hume provides a model of a philosopher that is distinctly more modern in flavor than he has often been interpreted. Through his skeptical realism, Hume is essentially an early forerunner in undermining the powers of reason and privileging of the subject that comes along in the centuries following him. One can garner from Strawson's interpretation that Hume firmly recognized the limitations of our finite knowledge base and further provided a certain respect to the outside world and objects in particular that precludes us from understanding their veiled nature.

Although Strawson provides a robust account of the limitations of human knowledge, his works still remain locked in this very same discourse. While the *Enquiry into Human Understanding* was more strictly a text that focused on epistemology, the *Treatise* was devoted to developing a theory of human nature. In particular, Strawson manages to overlook an imperative point in the *Treatise* regarding impressions and how they function in affecting the Humean subject. Much more time will be spent on impressions in the next chapter; however, what can be briefly discussed here is that impressions and how they are formed remain the distinctive link between

[57] Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 49.
[58] Strawson, "David Hume: Objects and power," 38.
[59] Strawson, "David Hume: Objects and power," 38.

the internal and external world. Hume writes, "All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS. The difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and liveliness, with which they *strike* upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness."[60] While it could be claimed Hume is merely using a rhetorical strategy, it should be noted that Hume returns to this tactile and affective language throughout the *Treatise.*[61] This presents somewhat of a paradox for Hume and Strawson; it would seem that from the continued use of this language that Hume is indicating something specific about the outside world, and in turn, by stating that something *strikes* the senses, he is making a specific claim about the world as such. I will provide a solution to this specific paradox in formulating my own version of the skeptical realist Hume in the next chapter, but a glimpse of this issue can be seen here.

Two distinct paths have been covered in this chapter; first, there are the traditional readings of Hume that are quick to write off his work as radical skepticism, which culminates in anti-realism. Second, while the New Hume Debate seeks to establish a realist Hume, they remain locked within stagnant epistemological concerns. From this investigation, it was shown that although imperfect, Galen Strawson's work on Hume has succeeded in moving modern Hume interpretations away from the traditional detractors that buried his works so long ago. However, Strawson's move away from these interpretations is far from sufficient; and due to this, some additional work is needed which will be exhibited in the next chapter.

[60] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 7. Italics are mine.
[61] See Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 7, 8, 11, 47, 50, 72, 95, 101, 103, 130, 136, 154, 172, 207, 220, 238, 248, 250, 290, 340, 343.

SOLUTION TO THE PARADOX OF THE ORIGIN OF IMPRESSIONS

Introduction

The previous chapter set out to complete an excavation in order to return to a Hume that is free of the layers of sediment that have been attached from historical interpretations. This excavation process was completed in order to uncover Hume's realism. This uncovering will produce a new encounter with the skeptical realist Hume through Deleuze's text *Empiricism and Subjectivity* in order to lay bare the limits of everyday encounters with objects. To achieve this, I first began with the Common Sense philosophers of Scotland and mainly investigated the work of Thomas Reid in order to reveal the anti-realist prejudice that haunts current readings of Hume. Through this investigation, it was shown that the radical skepticism that interpreters in the Common Sense attached to Hume were based on misreadings of the severity of Hume's skepticism. Next, the excavation moved on to Immanuel Kant, whose interpretation of Hume was shown to be very much reliant on the Common Sense school as Kant only had Beattie's interpretation of Hume at his disposal. Although Kant ultimately disagreed with the Common Sense interpretation, his understanding of the *Treatise* remained somewhat reliant on Beattie's presentation.

By digging through these layers, more current interpretations of Hume could be given full attention. By focusing on the more recent debates about Hume within the context of the New Hume debate, it was shown that the no-single Hume line of thinking was insufficient. The central issue that arose in the no-single Hume position was that the final Pyrrhonian Hume stage that was inevitably reset by the Gentlemanly Hume led Hume's entire project into a space without a final conclusion. From there, the skeptical realist position was presented from Galen Strawson. While this interpretation remains strong, it remains incomplete as it struggles to escape the very epistemologically focused interpretations of Hume that it argues and wants to differentiate itself

from. Further, this interpretation is incomplete as it potentially succumbs to the paradox regarding the originary strike that attacks the senses to form impressions and ideas.

This chapter will begin by explicitly focusing on this paradox. As Strawson explained, the skeptical realist Hume is unable to make accurate claims about the external world but can form beliefs about it. However, given Hume's repeated usage of the word "strike" and the reliance on affective and tactile language to describe this occurrence, it would seem that what Hume is describing something beyond our senses. To remedy this situation and prepare the ground for the skeptical realist Deleuze-Hume encounter, I will first problematize the origin of impressions. Following this, I claim that if Hume's notions of impressions are read through Derrida's notion of touch in *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, a solution can be provided to the paradox itself.

Once this paradox is resolved, the encounter with Deleuze's interpretation can begin. First, I will intervene in Deleuze's notion of Hume's atomism. By substituting the reading of impressions that will be fleshed out in the first section of this chapter, I will show that Deleuze's Hume retains the necessary realist position. Second, in light of this realism, I will shift focus to the most far-reaching aspect of Deleuze's work on Hume, which is the notion of associationism. While Deleuze focuses explicitly on the human subject in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, I will make the claim that associationism is far more reaching than is given credit for. In turn, this will produce a reading of Hume that, while still in the skeptical realist camp, moves beyond the discussions of *what we can know.*

The Origin of Impressions

Through Galen Strawson's interpretation of Hume, it was shown that Hume's radical skepticism is far more muted than it was historically interpreted and further that Hume retains a natural belief in external objects and causation. However, due to the limitations of human knowledge, we can never be certain about what the objects are like under the veil of their sensory interactions. Although a strong argument, Strawson's interpretation leaves room for a potential paradox. This paradox stems from the origin of impressions in Hume will be the primary focus of the current section.

Hume begins his empirical account of human nature by starting with the *Understanding*. In this book, Hume attempts to lay out an empirical epistemology, specifically showing how subjects come to interact and maneuver in the world around us and how we come to have an understanding of the various encounters that take place in daily life. Hume begins specifically with how impressions and ideas arise in the mind. Hume writes, "All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS. The difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and liveliness, with which they *strike* upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness."[62] In the quoted passage, Hume is explaining how exactly an idea comes to be. There is something external in the world that strikes the mind; this sensory event formulates an impression, or an idea given the force and liveliness of the strike itself. While Hume's usage of specific tactile and affective language may seem to be simply rhetorical in nature, he returns to word several times throughout the *Treatise.*[63] The strike to the senses plays a cardinal role in the subject's interaction with the world around

[62] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 7. Italics are mine.
[63] See Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 7, 8, 11, 47, 50, 72, 95, 101, 103, 130, 136, 154, 172, 207, 220, 238, 248, 250, 290, 340, 343.

them. Hume goes on to write, "An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea."[64] This passage exhibits the process in which an idea comes to be formed through the copy principle. To restate, when an impression strikes the senses, one feels it. The impression's force and vivacity are copied in the mind, which result in the ideas we come to form about heat, cold, and so on. This is a common experience that can be expanded on by way of example. If one strolls outside from the temperature-controlled building they have been residing in, the temperature difference strikes the senses. This immediate strike to the senses leaves an impression of cold or hot. The strike exerts some kind of force on the person. The strike leaves an impression that is subsequently copied within the mind. Thus, an idea of this specific coldness is retained. From this, one can then form beliefs and judgments about the temperature of the outside through the ordering of ideas in the imagination.

A potential paradox is created for the skeptical realist that stems from the primacy of the strike that is returned to repeatedly by Hume. To quote from Strawson's skeptical realist position from earlier, "…a knowledge claim is ruled out by his scepticism. The belief that there is some such thing as Causation is not ruled out, however. Scepticism can acknowledge the naturalness of this belief, and grant that it may well be something like the truth; it will merely insist that although we believe it, we cannot prove it to be true."[65] On this view, a knowledge claim regarding the outside world or the strike to the senses itself is ruled out by Hume's skepticism. Thus, the claim that "impressions strike upon the senses" cannot be considered to be a *knowledge*

[64] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 11.
[65] Strawson, "David Hume: Objects and power," 36.

claim and can only extend to belief. As Strawson notes, the belief itself is not ruled out entirely, but it cannot be proven to be consistent with reality as objects and causation remain veiled beyond our sensory experience. Right from the outset, Hume's commitment to realism is cast into doubt in the following ways. One, either the notion of the strike to the senses is simply a belief and cannot be known. Considering the primacy of this event, it is very possible that the interaction with the outside world could be similar or entirely different. At best, it is some kind of approximation of reality and, at worst, idealism. Or, two, Hume is making a claim outside of the reach of his own philosophical constraints. If this is a possible instance of where we can formulate a genuine knowledge claim about the outside world, then at what point does the ability to do this stop? This creates a major contradiction and nullifies not only the work Hume puts forward in the *Treatise* but also the entirety of his works. This is undoubtedly a problem for both Hume and the skeptical realist interpretation. Either Hume's works are pulled into the vacuum of idealism and anti-realism, or they suffer from a major contradiction before they even begin.

A solution to this paradox can only be given by trying to render what exactly an impression is. While Hume's use of tactile language is certainly in line with his empiricism, there is also a significant influence from Isaac Newton. As Norman Kemp Smith explains, Hume carries "…over Newton's methods and point of view into the sphere of philosophy."[66] Due to this influence, the tactile and physical language utilized could very well be an ode to an influential figure in Hume's intellectual becoming. Alternatively, it could very well be the case that in keeping with this language, Hume was hoping to port some scientific weight into his own philosophy. While Newton's influence should not be doubted, the major importance in using

[66] Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume*, 53.

terms such as impression and strike should not be ignored. Needless to say, something more is needed.

In reflecting on the word impression itself, what can be found? When one sees the words on the pages of a book or footprints in the snow, what are they? The answer to this question is more profound than it may seem on its face. When I take a step onto the snow-covered ground and leave behind a footprint, I am leaving behind a residue. A residue of presence. A stamp or mark that has been left behind from the pressure of my foot in the snow. This residue itself is a signification of absence, a sign that something was once there but now is gone. Turning inward to the mind, impressions for Hume are copies of copies. A film negative of the body's interaction with the outside world. Something in some kind of way has left an imprint on the body and vice versa.

What does it mean when Hume writes, "That idea of red, which we form in the dark, *and that impression, which strikes our eyes in sun-shine*, differ only in degree, not in nature."[67] If the impression remains the film negative in the mind of the subject, the strike or striking itself must retain some primacy with regard to the outside world. Something is hitting the senses with the force and vivacity that Hume describes in order to render the residue or impression left behind, which then becomes copied as an idea. In trying to discern what the *strike* is that occurs when the sun shines, it must initially be recognized that a strike or blow is a tactile experience related to the sense of touch. Given the usage of the word strike that has been provided thus far, it should come into view that Hume views our interactions with the world through a tactile lens. The primacy of the strike is present even in instances of temperature differentiation such as hot or cold. With its force and vivacity, the impression indicates hot, cold,

[67] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 8. Italics are mine.

pleasure, or pain, but this chain of succession is ultimately born from the strike or touch. What does it mean then to touch?

An unlikely source can resolve this issue as the paradox still looms large. In *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy,* while the text itself is wide-ranging, Derrida makes several critical remarks that concern my project. A significant point of attention is as follows, "To touch is to touch a limit, a surface, a border, an outline. Even if one touches an inside, "inside" of anything whatsoever, one does it following the point, the line or surface, the borderline of a spatiality exposed to the outside, offered—precisely—on it's running border offered to contact."[68] There is much to unpack here. First, Derrida calls into question the very notion of touching itself. A touch is often thought of as merely making contact with something. When one touches, the emphasis is always placed on the one doing the touching, the action itself of touching another. In being touched, the emphasis is placed on the one being touched. The feeling of having been touched by another. What is ignored is the double process of touch itself. Thus for Derrida, to touch is always to touch a limit. Even in touching an inside, there remains a limit of what is exposed to the outside. When one puts their hand inside a glove, they are not touching the inside of the glove but are rather at the very limit of the space exposed to the exterior. In this sense, one is never *truly* touching the inside but only touching the very limit of the exterior.

The paradox can potentially be resolved by virtue of this notion of touching. As shown through the Derrida passage, when one touches or is touched, no touching as it is normally conceived takes place. Touching is instead a bringing together of two limits, a strike of two outsides. Hume's notion of the strike that takes place can then be conceived of as an affective

[68] Jacques Derrida, *On Touching- Jean-Luc Nancy,* trans. Christine Irizarry, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 103.

interaction between the exterior limit of two things. The strike itself is then rendered as a placeholder for some kind of non-definitive interaction with the limit of the outside world. In turn, the subject who is struck is only struck at the very limit of their externality. To use a crude example, when I see the cup on my desk, what takes place in the sensory interaction is not a collision of the cup's sensory profile and my sense of vision, but instead, there is a bringing together of two separate exterior limits. I experience the very limit of the cup's externality and vice versa.

Given that the strike upon one's senses is the interaction of two limits, there is no claim made about the nature of the outside world that cannot be verified. The strike in this instance is drained of its colloquial meaning but retains its primary role in Hume's theory of impressions and ideas. The strike can now be viewed in the following sense: following from the interaction between the external limit of two objects, the interaction itself leaves behind a residue or an imprint on the external limit of the objects involved. What is left over is the film negative discussed earlier or, in Hume's terms, an impression. In human affairs, this impression would then be copied based on its degree of force and vivacity and then become an idea.

This reengineering of the strike results in the dissolution of the paradox mentioned earlier. In the paradox, it was stated that the strike to the senses could not be a knowledge claim about the outside world. That at best, the theory of impressions approximates reality based on a belief that cannot be proven and, at worst, descends into idealism. Or, alternatively, Hume was making a claim outside of the reach of his own philosophical constraints, resulting in a contradiction and subsequent nullification of his philosophical enterprise. In order to resolve the paradox, the notion of the strike was disassembled and, in turn, deployed as an instance of an interaction between two exterior limits. This notion of strike retains the necessary elements of

realism without making specific knowledge claims that transcend the constraints set by Hume. Given touching's undecidability, all that can be known is that something has taken place at the exterior limit of the senses. From this limit, a negative or impression is made from the residue of this interaction. This imprint is then copied into what Hume calls an idea. This novel reading of the origin of impressions freed the skeptical realist interpretation from making a knowledge claim about the external world's specific nature, but what is retained is the knowledge that something has taken place at the limit of the subject's externality. This allows for Hume to remain at a distance from all of nature's secrets, and the reality of nature herself remains veiled.

Deleuze's Hume

In view of the continental-analytic divide in the 20th Century, it was rare to see Hume mentioned as an influence in the works of a French or German philosopher. A major exception to this was Gilles Deleuze. In *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, Deleuze outlined "empiricism's secret," which is the capacity of the Humean subject to transcend the given field of atomic elements via the principles of association. To break this down further, what Deleuze saw in Hume was a way out of the problem of the given. In Deleuze's view, Hume foresaw the issue of the given that would come to occupy 20th-century phenomenology and went beyond it. Rather than the subject becoming bound by the unanswered questions of the given, the Humean subject moves on and creates and constructs something new.[69] Deleuze outlines two major points at work in Hume's

[69] The importance of moving beyond topics is further evidenced in Deleuze's discussion with Clair Parnet in *Dialogues.* Here Deleuze explains, "Every time someone puts an objection to me, I want to say: 'OK OK, let's go on to something else.' Objections have never contributed anything." See Gilles Deleuze & Claire Parnet, *Dialogues,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Barbara Habberjam, (UK: Anthlone Press, 1987), 1.

corpus. The first is Hume's atomism which is to say, the free-floating impressions and ideas in the mind. The second is associationism, which is the imagination's way of ordering these free-floating ideas and impressions. With associationism, we see the constructive and positive Hume. In what follows, I will begin by explaining what Deleuze means by Hume's atomism in more detail. I will then discuss whether Deleuze's interpretation of Hume falls into realism, anti-realism, or something other. Following this, I will explain the notion of associationism in much fuller detail. Lastly, I will show how this encounter with Deleuze's Hume sparks a view of skeptical realist ontology.

To begin with the first point of exegesis, Deleuze notes that one of the two crucial points in Hume's notion of the science of human nature is "atomism." Deleuze offers sparse explanations for what this explicitly means. He gives the most unambiguous indication by stating, "ATOMISM IS THE theory of ideas, insofar as relations are external to them."[70] What can be discerned from this quote is that Deleuze views Hume's theory of ideas as an atomism, meaning the free-floating ideas within the imagination of the Humean subject are parts that can come together in a certain order. This means that each impression or idea in the mind is its own free-floating and walled-off term. In this sense, one's impressions of hot, cold, pain, pleasure, and so on are simply atoms that reside unorganized in the imagination. Deleuze speaks to this point directly, "It is true, Hume constantly reiterates, that ideas are *in* the imagination."[71] What the imagination is then is specifically a place. Nothing is done by the imagination itself, for it serves as only a site for these collections of impressions and ideas. Deleuze further explains, "Being the place of ideas, the fancy is the collection of separate individual items."[72] From these

[70] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 105.
[71] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 23.
[72] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 23.

points, it can be seen that atomism for Deleuze does not necessarily reference the full theory of ideas but rather what takes place after the impressions and ideas have already been formed.

Due to the appearance of a lack of commitment to a realist or anti-realist reading of Hume, a fair number of commentators have speculated as to whether Deleuze's reading of Hume falls into an entirely separate category. Jeffrey Bell, in particular, argues that Deleuze's position is neither realist nor anti-realist. In "Between Realism and Anti-realism: Deleuze and the Spinozist Tradition in Philosophy," Bell writes:

> In the choice between Kant and Hume, therefore, Deleuze's preference seems clear–Hume. But where does this leave Deleuze relative to realism, and to metaphysics in particular? At first sight it might appear that Deleuze should be placed solidly within the anti-realist camp. After all, if what can be said of reality may in the end be illusory, and if Deleuze, much like Hume, is willing to say that 'there is no complete system, synthesis, or cosmology that is not imaginary', then it would seem to be difficult to place him in the realist camp. But is he therefore an anti-realist?[73]

Bell's answer to the question raised is that Deleuze falls in a space outside of both realism and anti-realism. The main concern here is, more specifically, Bell's rendering of Deleuze's reading of Hume. While Deleuze does not explicitly tackle the issue of realism and anti-realism in Hume, that does not necessarily imply that Deleuze falls into a space between the two positions. In fact, in reading *Empiricism and Subjectivity,* one has a hard time becoming convinced one way or another as several strands of various Hume interpretations are present in the text. Marc Rölli, in particular, notes something that would push Deleuze far closer to the anti-realist reading of Hume, he writes, "Deleuze takes as his starting point what to other authors – for example, Kant or Reid – must appear as the end of empiricism: its (apparently disastrous) culmination in

[73] Bell, "Between Realism and Anti-realism: Deleuze and the Spinozist Tradition in Philosophy," 4.

Humean scepticism."[74] A bit of controversy springs up: if Deleuze were to be moving from the disastrous conclusions of empiricism outlined by Kant and Reid, Deleuze's interpretation of Hume would be definitively aligned with the anti-realist Hume interpretation outlined in the first chapter. Furthermore, there is a claim with realist sympathies when Deleuze states, "Reason can always be brought to bear, but it is always brought to bear on a *preexisting world...*"[75] However, brief the statement, there is a clear indication of some kind of belief in a world that exists outside our immediate experience. In this sense, it becomes quite unclear that Deleuze is pushing for a "space between" or anti-realist interpretation of Hume.

The point becomes even more scrambled if Deleuze's interpretation of Hume is thought of from the stance of the no-single Hume interpretation. Deleuze's non-committal attitude springs up in the following quote, "Furthermore, because this skepticism has its origin and its motive on the outside, in the indifference of practice, practice itself is indifferent to skepticism: we can always play backgammon."[76] In the same fashion that one can gather an anti-realist interpretation of Hume from Deleuze, one can equally find a no-single Hume interpretation. One can see that Deleuze may or may not be referring to a practical Hume and skeptical Hume. The skeptical or even Pyrrhonian Hume casts doubt on the practical actions of the Gentlemanly Hume. However, the skeptical Hume is always indifferent to the practical by way of the split between the two, but this ultimately allows the practical Hume to play backgammon again.

To push this point even further, Deleuze's interpretation of Hume can also conform to the skeptical realist reading of Hume that Strawson provided. Given the point about backgammon, it

[74] Marc Rölli, *Gilles Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism*, trans. Peter Hertz-Ohmes, (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2016) 5.
[75] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 33.
[76] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 34.

does not seem likely that Deleuze would fall into the radical skeptic or anti-realist reading of Hume. For Deleuze, what one can know --the issue of radical skepticism-- is not of great concern. What concerns Deleuze is what we can create. That is, how the impressions and ideas that are gathered in the imagination become a system of beliefs that guide action. This point is evident from the Preface to the English edition of *ES.* Deleuze writes, “We start with atomic parts, but these atomic parts have transitions, passages, "tendencies,” which circulate from one to another. These tendencies give rise to habits. Isn’t this the answer to the question "what are we?” We are habits, nothing but habits...”[77] Again, Deleuze does not commit to a specific reading of Hume, but his focus centers on the question of what we are and what we become by virtue of our habits.

It can be argued then that Deleuze fits in everywhere and nowhere at the same time. While this is not the clear-cut answer one would hope for, there is a solution to this issue; Deleuze’s reading must defer to Hume. Although there was much difficulty in dissolving the paradox at the center of Hume’s theory of ideas and the origin of impressions, the solution to that paradox can serve as a jumping-off point in solidifying Deleuze’s reading of Hume’s alleged atomism. The interaction between the limits of the outside world becomes the residual photo negatives that are then copied into impressions and ideas. These impressions and ideas makeup what Deleuze refers to as atoms. Then, in turn, place the notion of Hume’s atomism firmly in the realist camp.

The second point of importance for Deleuze’s understanding of Hume is the notion of associationism. The free-floating impressions and ideas are then ordered within the imagination by what Deleuze refers to as the principles of association. As Deleuze notes, “… association

[77] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, Preface.

links ideas in the imagination; the passions give a sense to these relations, and thus they provide the imagination with a tendency."[78] Associations are then conjunctions that link together various impressions and ideas to form tendencies, habits, and beliefs. More plainly speaking, the notion of associationism can be viewed through what Deleuze refers to as "thinking AND rather than IS."[79] Thinking AND is the notion from which one comes to develop creative capacities and outlines the conjunctions of the various atoms that are present in the imagination. Associationism is the vehicle by which the collection becomes a system.

The brilliance of Deleuze's interpretation of Hume is that the notions of atomism and associationism appear at every level of human life. From the micro-level conjunctions of ideas in the mind of the individual subject to the macro level of the ways in which these associations take place in social life. Deleuze provides a fascinating example of the far-reaching extent that atomism and associationism play when he discusses the macro-level notions of society and the formation of institutions. Deleuze writes:

> The institution, unlike the law, is not a limitation but rather a model of actions, a veritable enterprise, an invented system of positive means or a positive invention of indirect means. This understanding of the institution effectively reverses the problem: outside of the social there lies the negative, the lack, or the need. The social is profoundly creative, inventive, and positive.[80]

In the above passage, Deleuze explicitly explains the function of the principles of atomism and associationism at an extended level. Outside of the social world, human existence is an unordered and free-flowing mass of atoms. Inventive and creative conjunctions take place amongst these atoms through the ordering principles of associationism. These associations produce what Deleuze refers to as a set of conventions. Deleuze writes, "Society is a set of

[78] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 63.
[79] See Deleuze & Parnet, *Dialogues,* 58-59.
[80] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 46.

conventions founded on utility, not a set of obligations founded on a contract."[81] One can see that the two points of Hume's empiricism, atomism and associationism, function as a system of flow and breaks. In the example of society, Deleuze outlines that human life is an unordered flow of atoms that reside in a specific place. Through the associations of atoms, a break manages to wrangle these specific flows and order them into something like a society. The social itself is a creative process much like the ways in which the Humean subject comes to form beliefs and habits in their everyday life. By forming a conjunction with one's fellows, a new emergent body can be formed from the previously unordered mass of persons. These new emergent bodies or societies are not set in stone as they are founded on a set of conventions and utility. Much like when one rids oneself of a false belief, a society can be scrutinized, torn down, and replaced with a new emergent body. What is of significant importance in Deleuze's reading of Hume is the rendering of how this specific process takes place.

From this process, Hume's ontology can be unrolled piece by piece. There are three requisite pieces at work. First is the external object itself. This is the object that Hume maintains that one can only have a superficial knowledge of. Second is what Deleuze explains as Hume's atomism. What can be inferred is that objects in the world are essentially free-floating flows. When an object interacts with a human subject or another object, they interact with each other at the very limit of their externality. The objects in this sense never truly touch or interact through their veiled internal reality. Third, these interactions can formulate associations. Through continued interactions at the limits of their externality, objects come to form new creative and inventive conjunctions. While never piercing or breaking down their own exteriors to reveal the

[81] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 46.

interior existence of these objects, they nonetheless can form a new series of conjunctions based on their touching at the external limit.

The first part of this tripartite follows from the discussion of Hume's realism. Through breaking down the various interpretations of Hume, it was noted that Hume falls into the realist camp. When Hume famously explains in the *Enquiry*, "…nature has kept us at a great distance from all her secrets, and has afforded us only the knowledge of a few superficial qualities of objects; while she conceals from us those powers and principles, on which the influence of these objects entirely depends."[82] Hume is explicitly referring to the limited extent that human beings can come to have knowledge of real objects or nature as it is in itself. Given that Hume provides no distinct privilege to human transcendence in the experience of objects in the world, it remains entirely possible that everything remains veiled to everything else. Objects in this sense also cannot go beyond their direct experience with other objects. The billiard ball that strikes another has the distinct experience of a collision but cannot breach the internality of the other ball and vice versa. Further, as Hume explains, "And experience only teaches us, how one event constantly follows another; without instructing us in the *secret connexion*, which binds them together, and renders them inseparable."[83] Experience only comes to show the effect of succession for the object; the secret nature of what produced the experience cannot be known as it would necessitate the breach of the other object's internality.

Second, if an object remains sealed off from another object and can only come to understand experience through succession while remaining unable to broach the "secret connexion" of things, how does Deleuze's notion of Hume's atomism come into play? Further,

[82] Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 24.
[83] Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 28. Italics are mine.

how do these objects come to interact? With the inner life of the object being walled off from the direct experience of the external world, there needs to be a point of mediation. Objects themselves serve as atoms on their own; they can come to form and interact with one another only on the basis of their sensual profiles. Similar to the way in which impressions are formed in the mind, a similar process is at work amongst objects. As individual things, objects are unordered masses but can interact with one another based on the striking that remained essential in Hume's notion of the origin of impressions. The interaction between two objects is an interaction that takes place at their external limit. Each object leaves behind a trace of this affect on the other object's sensual profile while never breaching the internal existence of this object. While it cannot be said that objects formulate impressions of other objects, it can be said that there remains a baseline of affectivity. This baseline of affect is what is shown through the central point of the strike to the senses that Hume describes in his theory of impressions. There is an interaction that takes place involving something outside of the object, but all that can be gathered from this interaction is that a residue from the event itself is left behind. Rather than a presence, there is instead a residue of an absence. How this is brought about remains veiled by the "secret connexion" of nature.

The third and final piece of the triangle is the principles of association outlined by Deleuze in *ES.* What is at work in associationism is the notion that relations are external to their terms. Deleuze explains it as such, "Associationism is the theory of relations, insofar as relations are external to ideas, in other words, insofar as they depend on other causes."[84] Associations are what order the free-floating atoms to formulate certain conjunctions. These associations are the relations that order the free-floating atoms within the imagination of the Humean subject. The

[84] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 105.

ordering of free-floating persons is how Hume comes to form his ethics: in that Hume's ethics is a continued extension or continual chain of a conjunction of sympathy. One can take the sympathy they feel for a family member and extend the range further and further in order to encompass more individuals.[85] In a different sense, associations are the ways in which a collection of individuals become a society. People are free-floating atoms that remain external to one another but come together in conjunction to form a larger emergent body or society.

Further of associationism is found in the text *Dialogues:* although this interview with Claire Parnet takes place long after Deleuze's book on Hume, many of the threads of associationism remain present. Deleuze describes this notion as thinking AND rather than is. He explains, "The AND is not even a specific relation or conjunction, it is that which subtends all relations, the path of all relations, which makes relations shoot outside their terms and outside the set of their terms, and outside everything which could be determined as Being, One, or Whole."[86] Deleuze in this passage that the AND is not a specific relation nor conjunction; this implies that relations and conjunctions as such have numerous possibilities. Positive and creative conjunctions can form amongst two persons, which results in something new and inventive. Alternatively, negative conjunctions can form that result in a poisonous outcome for all involved. What remains important is the notion that singular persons can conjoin to create an entirely different thing. When two people enter into a loving relationship, a new emergent body is formed from the two's conjunction. When discussing the formation of societies in Hume, Deleuze notes that society comes to be through an inventive conjunction of atoms. Deleuze explains further, "The fact that nature and society form an indissoluble complex should not make us forget that we

[85] See Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 55-73.
[86] Deleuze & Parnet, *Dialogues,* 57.

cannot reduce society to nature. The fact that humanity is an inventive species does not prevent our inventions from being inventions."[87] Deleuze is directly pointing to the fact that while nature/atoms and society/associations form an indissoluble complex, at the end of the day, the relations formed amongst the atoms cannot be reduced to their free-floating nature. Humanity's inventiveness does not somehow subvert nature, nor does it make the artifice that is created nature itself.

This has tremendous importance for the ontology that has been sketched thus far. Considering the thesis that all objects retain an internal existence that another object cannot breach and vice versa. Each object has an external limit that can interact with the external limit of other objects. Relations are formed by virtue of the repeated interaction between each of these objects. These relations themselves are exterior, and the objects themselves retain their irreducibility. While the creative process happens and conjunctions are formed, these are not to be mistaken as altering the inner nature of objects themselves. As Deleuze explains towards the end of *Empiricism and Subjectivity,* "Relations are external to their terms."[88] It can be said then that the relations come as a result of two objects, either that of human beings creating a society or that of a plant's root system and the soil it finds itself in, these relations remain something created between the two objects but never become the nature of those objects. The emergent body that forms from the two insulated objects is a product of an ordering that, while affecting them, does not come to pierce their inner nature.

Through this reading of Deleuze, the key to Hume's underlying ontology has been found through Deleuze's notions of the principles of atomism and associationism. From these

[87] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 46.
[88] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 99.

principles, a three-part ontology of objects was unwrapped. From the real inaccessible object, it was shown that the only knowledge that can be had about this object from other objects was the interaction between the two external limits of these objects. The objects in this sense never truly touch or interact through their veiled internal reality. By virtue of the interactions at their external limits, the objects come to form relations that produce conjunctions or emergent bodies. However, these conjunctions themselves do not result in an alteration to the internal and veiled nature of these objects themselves. These conjunctions can result in a multiplicity of positive or negative relationships for the objects whose internal existence remains the same. While this is something of a naïve realist position for Hume, what has been shown is an interpretation of external objects in Hume that goes beyond the typical epistemological interpretations of his works. Instead, this interpretation seeks to see the productive and positive aspects of Hume's position in regard to external objects as they are rather than focusing on splitting epistemological hairs. Nature still retains her secrets and while humans can never access these secrets, they can come to an understanding of the very limits of what is kept secret and what is left in the open.

CONCLUSION

This study has traversed several topics in regard to Hume's position within the realism and anti-realism debate. The first section of chapter one focused directly on Hume's contemporary critics, otherwise known as the Common Sense school of Scotland. These contemporary critics were evidenced by Thomas Reid's anti-realist reading of Hume. Although Reid was attempting to defend his form of direct perception realism from the absolute skeptic menace in Hume, he failed to heed the extensive evidence that exists in the *Treatise* that absolves Hume of this same charge. From this misreading, Kant's understanding of Hume was then investigated. In doing so, it was found that, by virtue of Wolff's paper on the timing of German translations of the *Treatise,* Kant would not have had access to Hume's text itself and instead would come to rely on passages that were translated in a text by Beattie who was among the Common Sense interpreters of Hume. Given this fact, it was argued that while Kant's interpretation of Hume was not a one-for-one recital of Beattie's views, it was at the very least colored by this interpretation. Further, it was then exhibited that Kant's reading of Hume relied on a less than accurate reading of Hume's position on causality.

After drilling through the historical sediment that had collected from the historical renderings of Hume and their influence on current understandings of his works, a look into the New Hume Debate was carried out. Two specific positions were targeted within the New Hume debate; one was the no-single Hume interpretation which claimed that at several different points throughout the *Treatise* and Hume's other works, that there are three different Hume's that emerge. This interpretation was argued against in that it produces a bizarre conclusion that results in Hume having taken no real end position at the end of the *Treatise.* The skeptical realist view of Hume was then interrogated. While Galen Strawson's interpretation provided a strong

case for Hume's muted skepticism and a firm belief in realism, this interpretation potentially fell victim to a significant paradox regarding the strike to the senses that Hume utilizes throughout his texts.

The second chapter began by dissolving the paradox that threatened the skeptical realist Hume interpretation. While reading Hume's theory of impressions and ideas through the touching/untouching notion found in Derrida, the issue of the strike to the senses being interpreted as a knowledge claim was dissolved. The focus was then turned to Deleuze's interpretation of Hume in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*. While some interpretative issues were shown to exist within Deleuze's commitment to one of the Hume interpretations presented in the first chapter, it was eventually resolved by deferring to Hume himself on the topics of impressions and ideas. From this point, attention was shifted to Deleuze's notion of associationism in Hume.

After some exegesis of the notion of associationism, the tripartite Deleuze-Hume ontology was explicated. From this point, it was determined that first, there is the external object itself. This is the object that Hume maintains that one can only have a superficial knowledge of. Second, was Deleuze-Hume's atomism. It was discovered that objects in the world are free-floating and isolated flows. When an object interacts with another, they interact at the very limit of their externality. The objects never truly interact through or alter their veiled internal reality. Third, these interactions can formulate associations. Through continued interactions at the limits of their externality, objects come to form new conjunctions. While never piercing or breaking down their own exteriors to reveal the interior existence of these objects, they nonetheless can form a new series of conjunctions based on their touching at the external limit.

A few final points should be considered here. Namely, what are the implications of this view for those working within the skeptical realist interpretation of Hume? On the other hand, what does this interpretation do for the new debate emerging in Deleuze scholarship regarding his commitments to realism, anti-realism, or something other? Beginning with the skeptical realist interpreters of Hume, Galen Strawson and others have undertaken significant scholarship to reveal Hume's realism. However, these scholars have a noticeable trend to fall back into the same epistemological discussion that they have sought to distance themselves from in their work. Further, while much is to be said about Hume raising concerns about nature's secrets, there has not yet been an attempt to express what takes place at the very limit of this interaction without falling into contradiction. I believe that the interpretation provided here presents a solution to the possible paradox that accompanies the skeptical realist view while staying within the lines of what Hume's epistemological constraints allow.

Second, it would seem to me that this interpretation provides fuel for the recently emerging debate centering around Deleuze's commitment to a realist position. While the proposed ontology that I have made in this study will not entirely link up with the whole of Deleuze's corpus, it does make an impact within two wings of the debate concerning Deleuze's commitment to realism/anti-realism or the middle space argued for by Jeffrey Bell and Marc Rölli. Working from the transcendental empiricist view of Deleuze, both Bell and Rölli maintain that Deleuze's work on Hume plays an essential role in unfolding their positions. For Rölli, Deleuze's transcendental empiricism begins from "…what to other authors – for example, Kant or Reid – must appear as the end of empiricism: its (apparently disastrous) culmination in Humean scepticism."[89] Following the discussion in chapter two, this claim presents some

[89] Röll, *Gilles Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism*, 5.

confusion given that Deleuze does not commit to starting from any of the Humean realist or anti-realist positions. Further, in Bell's estimation, Deleuze falls on the side of not taking a side, his works spring from a third space that is neither realist nor anti-realist, but if transcendental empiricism begins with Hume[90] and is present in the Hume work, then Deleuze must start from the position of Hume as well. This makes the following Bell's comments from bell confusing:

> At first sight it might appear that Deleuze should be placed solidly within the anti-realist camp. After all, if what can be said of reality may in the end be illusory, and if Deleuze, much like Hume, is willing to say that 'there is no complete system, synthesis, or cosmology that is not imaginary', then it would seem to be difficult to place him in the realist camp.[91]

Given this interpretation and the one presented in this work, it becomes difficult to accept the starting point of the transcendental empiricist view. If Deleuze does not provide a distinct commitment or non-commitment to a realist or anti-realist position and transcendental empiricism begins in the Hume book, then it cannot be the case that one can infer a position one way or another without deferring to what Hume explicitly states on the subject.

Further, it would appear that our interpretation of Hume's ontology and the key takeaway found in Deleuze's rendering of Hume is much more in line with the recent speculative realist reading of Deleuze. In particular, Arjen Kleinherenbrink's recent text *Against Continuity* describes an ontology in Deleuze that maintains the existence of irreducible singular entities. For Kleinherenbrink, there are two major theses at work in Deleuze's ontology. The first is the

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[90] Bell states, "In delineating the transcendental empiricism he sees at work in Hume, Deleuze claims that the transcendental component involves addressing the question, 'how can something be given to a subject, and how can the subject give something to itself?'; while the empiricist aspect addresses the question, 'how is the subject constituted in the given?' (ES 87)." See Jeffrey Bell, *Deleuze's Hume: Philosophy, Culture and the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2009) 15.

[91] Bell, "Between Realism and Anti-realism: Deleuze and the Spinozist Tradition in Philosophy," 4.

externality thesis, which states that machines cannot be reduced to one another. In describing the notion that relations are external to their terms, Kleinherenbrink explains, "If relations are external to their terms, entities must therefore have a private, internal reality."[92] Although Kleinherenbrink does not directly credit Deleuze's work on Hume to be responsible for the emergence of the externality thesis, from what has been presented here, it can be shown that this indeed is the case. The second of the two theses referred to as the Machinic Thesis, which describes that all relations amongst other machines formulate new machines.[93] Kleinherenbrink then moves to reconstruct Deleuze's ontology in view of a machine's fourfold structure and characterizes three syntheses that describe their interactions. What is of importance here is that Kleinherenbrink specifically defends the realist interpretation of Deleuze, and his interpretation would appear to receive some strengthening from the account of Deleuzean-Hume ontology presented in this work.

While the debate over Deleuze's commitments to realism, anti-realism, or the in-between will remain open, this work has provided an indirect defense of the realist interpretation of Deleuze. By destabilizing the Humean starting point of transcendental empiricism, the speculative realist position of Kleinherenbrink becomes a more attractive option. In the same sense, the debate over epistemological limits in Hume will also continue. I have put forward an ontological reading of Hume, that while sticking to epistemological constraints, exposes the limits of what we can know about the objects and the external world.

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[92] Arjen Kleinherenbrink, *Against Continuity: Gilles Deleuze's Speculative Realism* Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 51.
[93] Kleinherenbrink, *Against Continuity*, 7.

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