

Hume, Infallibilism, and Knowledge of the External World

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It is commonly held that if it is not possible that a knower errs with respect to what she knows, then it is not possible to have knowledge of the external world. With Hume as my case study, I argue to the contrary. Hume holds the former view—knowledge infallibilism—but could concurrently reject external world skepticism, if he endorses a version of direct realism. Those infallibilists who can go farther and relax some of Hume's rather restrictive views about sense perception can gain even greater distance from skepticism.

1. Introduction

Does knowledge infallibilism—the view that a knower could not err with respect to what she knows—rule out knowledge of the external world?¹ Many contemporary epistemologists would answer this question in the affirmative.² Given that moral truths, future facts, and the members of other epistemically desirable categories are widely held to be unknowable under infallibilism, one would not be blamed for turning one's attention to views under which knowledge comes easier. Abandon the position and avoid the bad consequences.

This seems to be a common reaction to Hume's classic arguments about the limits of our knowledge; they are taken to constitute a powerful case against infallibilism, in spite of Hume's own intentions. Indeed, Hume's extremely restrictive position on knowledge might seem rather outdated, especially given the well-developed alternatives available nowadays. Yet, in this paper, I will argue that Hume's infallibilism does *not* rule out some of the most desirable kinds of knowledge. In particular, I will argue that Hume could remain the kind of infallibilist he is but still rightfully maintain that we can acquire knowledge of the external world. The other ingredient which must be added for Hume to end up a skeptic about the external world is a particular kind of view about what is immediately present to the mind.³ The kind of view in question is direct realism, members of which hold that mind-independent beings (those that are ontologically distinct from the mind and any of its parts) are immediately present to the mind. A strain of direct realism considered by Hume combines with his infallibilism to entail the negation of external world skepticism. As a consequence, unless there is a consensus regarding Hume's view about what is immediately present to the mind (and it appears there is not), there should be no consensus about his position on external world skepticism.

Canvassing whether direct realism or its alternatives enable Hume to avoid external world skepticism reveals the manner with which infallibilism interfaces with skepticism more generally. My exploration shows that infallibilism is not singularly responsible for external world skepticism, as many have supposed. Some strains of direct realism provide ample space

¹ Henceforth, I will use 'infallibilism' to refer to infallibilism about knowledge. I discuss more precise definitions of infallibilism in section 2.

² For affirmative answers and/or relevant discussion, see Klein 1981 (134-135), Lewis 1996, Rysiew 2001 (504-505), Vogel 2004 (438-439), Dodd 2007, Littlejohn 2008, and Brown 2018.

³ When I use 'external world skepticism' and similar terms, I refer to the view that one could not know, even in principle, any (non-logical) propositions about the external world. More on this assumption in section 6.

for the infallibilist to deny external world skepticism, regardless of how strongly the latter view is formulated. In short, the more about the external world that the infallibilist can establish to be immune to error, the farther the infallibilist can get from external world skepticism. Thus, although this paper is focused on Hume and the idiosyncrasies of his views, it has broader implications for how epistemologists should understand the relation between infallibilism and external world skepticism.

In the next section, I will argue that Hume is an infallibilist after explaining Hume's position on the objects of knowledge. In section 3, I will examine Hume's position on the nature of knowledge, with a focus on why he holds that both instances and objects of knowledge must be immediately present to the mind. Section 4 consists of an analysis of the various metaphysical views Hume could take on the relationship between the immediately present and the mind, as well as their connections with external world skepticism. In section 5, I consider what exactly Hume would hold we could know about the external world if he were a direct realist. I conclude in section 6.

2. Infallibilism and Hume's infallibilism

What is infallibilism? In rough terms, defenders of this view hold that a knower could not err with respect to what she knows, but it is disputed how we ought to explicate what the relevant sort of infallibility amounts to. Definitions formulated in the recent literature are a natural place to start in answering this question with greater precision, and I will begin by considering whether Hume's position is consistent with them.

An immediate obstacle to establishing that Hume is an infallibilist is the dearth of definitions that are neutral with respect whether it is necessary that if one knows that p , then one believes that p . There is good reason to think that Hume, like Locke, would deny this presently widespread view (the so-called "entailment thesis").⁴ Nonetheless, it is helpful to get a sense of the ways that infallibilism is often characterized by considering the range of definitions that presume that knowledge entails belief. Here is a sample:

- (1) S knows that p if, and only if, S's belief that p is warranted, and S's belief that p is warranted only if p is true.⁵
- (2) Only a true belief gained infallibly could be knowledge.⁶
- (3) S knows p just if S infallibly believes p .⁷

⁴ Hume would deny the entailment thesis because (i) he holds that all beliefs are generated by custom (either via associations or mere repetition) and (ii) he denies that demonstrative knowledge is generated by custom. It follows that instances of demonstrative knowledge are distinct from all beliefs. For (i), see T 1.3.9.16. For (ii), see T 1.3.6. Given Hume's Conceivability Principle (which is the claim that "whatever we conceive is possible" (T 1.4.5.10)) and his Separability Principle (which is the claim that "whatever objects are different are distinguishable, and that whatever objects are distinguishable are separable by the thought and imagination" (T 1.1.7.3)), it follows that it is possible that one knows something via demonstration without believing it. Since some of what one could know via demonstration cannot be intuited, it follows that Hume must deny the entailment thesis. As for Locke, he seems to simply define belief and knowledge as mutually exclusive. See *Essay* IV.xv and especially E IV.xv.3, where Locke defines "belief" as "the admitting or receiving any Proposition for true, upon Arguments or Proofs that are found to persuade us to receive it as true, without certain Knowledge that it is so."

⁵ This popular definition is originally owed to Alvin Plantinga (1993, 3). A similar definition is given in Merricks 1995 (841), Howard-Snyder, Howard-Snyder, & Feit 2003 (304), and Moon 2013 (287-288).

⁶ Hetherington 2018 (4683).

⁷ Dutant 2016 (148).

(4) S knows that p if, and only if, it is not the case that S's belief that p on the basis of justification j could have been false.⁸

(5) S knows that p if, and only if, it is not the case that S believes that p on the basis of justification j and j does not entail that S's belief that p is true.⁹

(6) S knows that p if, and only if, it is not the case that S's belief that p on the basis of justification j could have failed to be knowledge.¹⁰

The preceding definitions can be modified to avoid presuming the entailment thesis, but some complications would arise.¹¹ If Hume is to be an infallibilist, a more general definition of infallibilism is needed. The following two are representative:

(7) If S knows that p , then the probability of p on her evidence [for p] is 1.¹²

(8) If S knows that p on the basis of evidence e , then e entails p .¹³

With one tweak, it will become clear that Hume would endorse (7). Hume's relationship with (8) is more complicated, but I will argue that he would endorse it as well. In order to see why, and thus in order to see why Hume is an infallibilist (as the field defines that position), we must begin by examining his position on what I, following Hume (T 1.3.1.2), will call the 'objects of knowledge', which are those beings that are knowable.¹⁴ (In this context, the opposite of 'object' is 'subject', so the objects of knowledge are not objects in the sense that rocks and cups are—in fact, Hume maintains that the objects of knowledge are propositions.¹⁵) We must start with Hume's position on the objects of knowledge because Hume is most explicit about the objects of knowledge and we can infer much about his position on knowledge from what he writes about them.

Hume's view is that the objects of knowledge are tokens of four kinds of the so-called "philosophical relations" that, for this reason, I will call the 'knowledge relations'.¹⁶ Philosophical

⁸ Reed 2002 (144). Given that Baron Reed holds that infallibilism and knowledge fallibilism are "contradictories", this definition can be generated from what Reed calls 'FK1', suitably modified.

⁹ Reed 2002 (144). This is generated from what Reed calls 'FK2' (see footnote 8).

¹⁰ Reed 2002 (149). This is generated from what Reed calls 'FK5' (see footnote 8).

¹¹ However, I do think that Hume maintains that knowledge is factive, per (1) and (4); that the justification for an instance of knowledge that p must entail p , per (5); and that any (justified) instance of knowledge could not have failed to be an instance of knowledge, per (6).

¹² Brown 2013 (626). Jessica Brown calls this 'probability 1 infallibilism', following Timothy Williamson (2000). A similar definition is given by Dylan Dodd (2011, 665), who inserts 'epistemic' before 'probability' in the definition. I have added 'for p ' to clarify (7) so that (7) will not be endorsed by those fallibilists who hold that anything that S knows is part of S's total evidence. Fallibilists of this variety deny that in every possible case p is evidence for itself, so they would not endorse (7) in its modified form.

¹³ Brueckner 2005 (384). Similar definitions can be found in Feldman 1981 (266-267), Cohen 1988 (91), Stanley 2005a (127), Dougherty & Rysiew 2009 (123), and Brown 2018 (4). This definition is equivalent to the definition of infallibilism given in Reed 2010 (234) which asserts that if S knows that p , then it is not epistemically possible for S that $\sim p$, at least if it is assumed that a proposition p is epistemically possible for S if, and only if, what S knows does not entail $\sim p$. For discussion, see Stanley 2005a (128). Similar definitions can be found in DeRose 1991 (596), Lewis 1996 (549), and Huemer 2007 (120).

¹⁴ For an explanation of this citation format, see the Primary Texts and Abbreviations sections.

¹⁵ See footnote 27 for further discussion of the latter point.

¹⁶ This is a stipulative label, but others have used this term before, such as Miren Boehm (2013, 69). Regarding the type-token distinction, note that I do not mean to imply that Hume is not a nominalist. For Hume, there are no types that are distinct from all of the tokens that fall under them. See T 1.1.7.

relations play a very important role in Hume's system.¹⁷ Hume argues that when we compare beings in any respect, we have an immediately present "perception" that has a philosophical relation between those beings as its object.¹⁸ For instance, when I think of my friend's resemblance to their parent, I am thinking of a philosophical relation that holds between my friend and their parent. The adjective 'philosophical' is Hume's nod to the fact that philosophers are prone to specify and consider a wide range of relations in philosophical discussions. More so than others, we philosophers "may think proper to compare" an arbitrary pair of beings and thereby relate them in a philosophical fashion (T 1.1.5.1). Hume also describes philosophical relations as "any particular subject of comparison, without a connecting principle." In discussing composition, for instance, a metaphysician might tell us to consider all those beings 3281 meters from the tip of the Statue of Liberty's nose. In doing so, they are specifying a sort of relation that only a philosopher would ever consider.

Of course, Hume does not maintain that all philosophical relations are specified by fiat. Some are simply given to us in sense perception; they are part of what is immediately visible to us.¹⁹ And indeed, Hume maintains that some philosophical relations are "natural" in the sense that one's mind tends to associate one relatum with the other.²⁰ When I think of my friend, my mind may naturally wander to think of my friend's parent. After all, resemblance is, by Hume's lights, one of the natural relations. Hume's point in using the term 'philosophical' is that the range of the philosophical relations that one can conceive is limited only to what one can compare, and one can compare a whole lot.²¹ Crucially, the sort of comparison evoked here is a minimally-demanding one that does not require us to have higher-order awareness of what we compare as we compare.²² For instance, I compare two blue patches in my visual field as resembling with respect to blueness simply in virtue of seeing them simultaneously.

In T 1.3.1, Hume argues that the knowledge relations are all and only those philosophical relations that beings bear to one another solely in virtue of their *intrinsic* properties. But why is this criterion the relevant one? Hume's view is that for a relation to qualify as a knowledge relation, it must be such that if one has the intrinsic properties of the relata in mind, then one is certain that they bear the relation to one another. There must be no room for error about whether the relation holds, and so whether the relation holds must not depend on the extrinsic properties of its relata. Hume holds that the only relations that satisfy this condition are resemblances, proportions in quantity or number, degrees in quality, and contrarities. Hence, my perceiving that two blue patches in my visual field resemble with respect to blueness is an instance of knowledge. Since I have the blueness of the patches in mind, I am certain that they resemble with respect to blueness. Nothing extrinsic to the patches could make me err about whether this

¹⁷ In fact, Hume dedicates an entire section of the *Treatise* to them: T 1.1.5.

¹⁸ I interpret perceptions as the objects of the mind, and they can have intentional objects of their own. All perceptions are either ideas or impressions. See T 1.1.1.1, T 1.1.3.1, T 1.1.7.4, T 1.1.7.7, T 1.2.6.7-9, T 1.4.2.21, T 1.4.2.37, T 1.4.2.47, T 2.2.2.22, T 3.1.1.2, A 5, and E 2.1-3. I subscribe to what has been termed the 'Object View', which I take to be the standard view. See Cottrell 2018 (2-3) for a recent discussion of the option space. I will discuss the metaphysics of the Object View in sections 3 and 4.

¹⁹ See, e.g., T 1.3.1.2 and T 1.3.2.2.

²⁰ Hume first makes this distinction in T 1.1.4.1. For further discussion, see T 1.3.6.12-16, T 1.3.14, A 35, and E 3.2.

²¹ See Millican 2017 (5-6) in this connection.

²² For passages where Hume uses 'comparison' in this sense, see T 1.1.5.2-7, T 1.2.4.21-31, T 1.3.1.6, T 1.3.2.2, T 1.3.4.3, T 1.3.11.2, T 1.3.14.31, and T 1.1.7.7n5App. Hume understands the relevant sort of comparison as an extremely minimal one that does not require higher-order awareness because he holds that what prior philosophers identify as "judgment" and "reasoning" just is "conception". That is, to judge or to reason is just to conceive in specific ways. See T 1.1.1.7n5App.

relation holds between them. (As these examples should make clear, these relations are *not* relations between a knower and what she knows or could know. These relations are what she knows or could know.)

Hume also maintains that the knowledge relations are necessary.²³ This aspect of Hume's position stems from his endorsement of the Conceivability Principle, which is the claim that "whatever we conceive is possible" (T 1.4.5.10).²⁴ Hume argues that, for any two beings x and y , and for any relation R which is *not* a knowledge relation, if we conceive of the intrinsic properties of x and y , we do not thereby conceive either xRy or $\sim(xRy)$. The intrinsic properties of the two do not determine that we conceive of them as so related or not. Given the Conceivability Principle, it follows that it is possible that xRy and it is possible that $\sim(xRy)$, regardless of the intrinsic properties of x and y and which non-knowledge relation R is. This line of reasoning is one prong of Hume's negative position on the necessary connection that holds between causal relata. Having all of the intrinsic properties of two billiard balls in mind does not require conceiving of them as causally related or not, so it is not necessary that they are causally related (for any two billiard balls).²⁵

By contrast, whether or not the knowledge relations hold is entirely determined by the intrinsic properties of their relata. The intrinsic properties of beings fix the knowledge relations that they bear to one another. It is thus necessary that the knowledge relations hold or do not hold between any two beings. If this were not the case, one's access to the intrinsic properties of the relata of the knowledge relations would not provide one with certainty about whether the relations hold or not. One could have the intrinsic properties of two beings in mind but there would still be room to err about whether they bear a given knowledge relation to one another or not (because it would be possible that this relation holds and possible that it does not).²⁶

There is one remaining issue—albeit a minor one—that stands between us and an evaluation of Hume's relationship with (7) and (8). It is that these definitions of infallibilism are formulated in terms of propositions and not knowledge relations. However, there is reason to think that the knowledge relations are propositions on Hume's view.²⁷ If so, then Hume would endorse knowledge propositionalism, which is the view that the objects of knowledge are propositions (and so, as a corollary, Hume would deny that there is knowledge-how, personal knowledge, objectual knowledge, and so on).²⁸

²³ As Boehm (2013, 68) notes, the relevant sort of necessity is absolute or metaphysical necessity. See Boehm 2013 (76-79) for further discussion.

²⁴ See also T 1.1.7.6 and A 11.

²⁵ See, e.g., T 1.3.6.1, T 1.3.9.10, T 1.3.14.13, and E 4.2.

²⁶ If I imagine two blue patches simultaneously, then I must conceive that they resemble with respect to blueness—imagining that they do not so resemble is not an option. However, in any given case of a putative knowledge relation xRy , the fact that only one of xRy and $\sim(xRy)$ is conceivable is only *evidence* that R is a knowledge relation, since Hume denies that mere inconceivability implies impossibility. As I will discuss in section 5, though, if one of xRy or $\sim(xRy)$ is inconceivable because it is a contradiction, then Hume would hold that it is impossible. For relevant discussion, see Millican 2017 (33-43).

²⁷ For instance, in the first *Enquiry* Hume argues "*That the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the square of the two sides*, is a proposition, which expresses a relation between these figures. *That three times five is equal to the half of thirty*, expresses a relation between these numbers" (E 4.1). Hume refers to these relations as "relations of ideas", which is one of Hume's terms for the knowledge relations. However, note that Hume holds that there are propositions that are *not* knowledge relations (e.g. "matters of fact"; see E 4.2) and propositions that are *not* philosophical relations at all (e.g. identity and existential claims; see T 1.4.2.26 and T 1.3.7.5n20 respectively).

²⁸ This is to assume that knowledge-how does not reduce to knowledge-that. For discussion and defense of this reductionist view, see Stanley & Williamson 2001, Stanley 2011a, Stanley 2011b, and Brogaard 2011.

But if Hume endorses knowledge propositionalism, if he holds that the objects of knowledge are the knowledge relations, and if he holds that the knowledge relations are necessary relations, then he is close to endorsing (7), which states that if S knows that p , then the probability of p on her evidence for p is 1. The wrinkle is that Hume denies that propositions with probability 1 have any probability at all, in his sense of the term. As Hume writes, "there is no probability so great as not to allow of a contrary possibility; because otherwise 'twou'd cease to be a probability, and wou'd become a certainty" (T 1.3.12.14). But since it is a plausible presumption that if the probability of p on S's evidence for p is 1, then p is certain given S's evidence, Hume would endorse (7).

The case of (8) is more complicated. (8) states that if S knows that p on the basis of evidence e , then e entails p . Assuming that any evidence e must be a proposition, the first issue is that Hume holds that propositions *have* evidence, but are not themselves evidence.²⁹ Yet, Hume does write of what we would call "evidence" as that which our knowledge "depends" on.³⁰ Likewise, Hume does not use the term 'entail'; instead, he uses the term 'imply'.³¹ The closest Hume can get to (8), then, is if it is reformulated as the claim that if S's knowledge that p depends on e , then e implies p . But before we can evaluate whether Hume would endorse this reformulation of (8), some further background is needed. Hume maintains that there is a distinction between intuition and demonstration, which are the only two ways in which we can acquire knowledge.³² The two kinds of knowledge resulting from these two methods of acquisition (intuitive and demonstrative knowledge) must be treated separately in relation to this reformulation of (8).

The relationship between the two ways of acquiring knowledge is asymmetric; Hume defines demonstration in terms of intuition, but does not define intuition in terms of demonstration. Demonstrative knowledge is realized when one links multiple instances of intuitive knowledge to one another in order to conceive a token of a knowledge relation.³³ Supposing that I cannot directly intuit that three are more than one, if I have demonstrative knowledge that three are more than one, then I must have (or *have had*, depending on one's interpretation of Hume on this point) intuitive knowledge like that three are more than two and that two are more than one. As this example indicates, intuitive knowledge is immediate—I simply intuit that two are more than one—while demonstrative knowledge is mediated by other knowledge. Intuitive knowledge just is knowledge that one acquires in virtue of immediately apprehending the relata of some knowledge relations (namely those that need *not* be demonstrated). A demonstration is a chain of intuitions.

Since knowledge relations are propositions on Hume's view, and Hume maintains that all knowledge relations are nothing over and above their relata, the relata of knowledge relations are the only constituents of knowable propositions. It follows that, when it comes to intuitive knowledge that p , what one's knowledge that p depends on, e , must be identical to p . As soon as one has all of p in mind, one knows that p . Nothing else is necessary. And unless one has all of p

²⁹ See, e.g., T 1.2.1.2, T 1.3.8.14, T 1.3.12.20, T 1.3.14.2, and T 1.4.2.20.

³⁰ See, e.g., T 1.3.1.1-2.

³¹ See, e.g., T 1.1.5.9, T 1.1.7.2, T 1.2.4.11, T 1.3.3.2, T 1.3.6.1, and T 1.3.9.10.

³² See T 1.3.3.1-3 for an argument of Hume's that relies on intuition and demonstration being the only two ways to achieve knowledge.

³³ As David Owen (1999, 9) puts it, "Two ideas are demonstratively related if the relation between them is conceived, not immediately, but via other intermediate ideas. The link between each pair of adjacent ideas in the resulting chain must be intuitive."

in mind, one does not know that p . Nothing else is sufficient. Since, for all p , p implies p , the reformulation of (8) follows, if it is taken to refer to intuitive knowledge.³⁴

Turning now to demonstrative knowledge, if e is the conjunctive proposition constituted by the knowledge relations that form the chain leading to the conclusion of a demonstration p , then e implies p . For instance, e could be the conjunctive proposition *that three are more than two and two are more than one*, and p could be the proposition *that three are more than one*. In this case, as in every other, e implies p . By definition, demonstrative knowledge must be acquired by realizing conjunctions e of this variety, so, for all p known by S via demonstration, S's knowledge that p depends on e . Therefore, the reformulation of (8) follows if it is taken to refer to demonstrative knowledge. Since Hume holds that intuitive and demonstrative knowledge are the only kinds of knowledge, he would endorse the reformulated (8). In sum, since (7) and (8) are representative definitions of infallibilism and Hume would endorse them both, Hume is an infallibilist.

3. The nature of Humean knowledge, immediate presence, and consciousness

Hume holds that tokens of the knowledge relations are the *objects* of knowledge, but this does not yet tell us how he understands the *nature* of knowledge. Likewise, one philosopher may agree with another that the objects of knowledge are abstract, mind- and language-independent propositions (understood in some specific way that they also agree about), but one might think that an instance of knowledge is a brain state, while the other does not. This is a disagreement about what knowledge itself is, and not a disagreement about what is knowable.

Getting clear on Hume's position on the nature of knowledge is essential to evaluating the relationship between his infallibilism and external world skepticism. As I noted above, Hume holds that all instances of knowledge are immediately present perceptions of tokens of the knowledge relations. But this is only half of the story. Hume also holds that if an immediately present perception is an instance of knowledge, then the token knowledge relation that it has as an object is an immediately present perception as well. In this section, I will discuss what this means, and how Hume comes to have this view. In the subsequent section, I will examine how Hume's metaphysical views about immediately present perceptions, the mind, and the external world might intersect.

Hume is an infallibilist because he demands certainty about what we know. We cannot err with respect to what we know. Given that anything that is not an immediately present perception could fail to be how it is represented to be, infallibility cannot be attained unless the objects of knowledge are immediately present perceptions. But why does immediate presence have this benefit? In short, Hume holds that immediately present perceptions are "immediately present to us by consciousness" (T 1.4.2.47), and so there is no possibility that the knower misrepresents them. The relevant sort of consciousness is infallible because it is merely awareness of what *appears*, what *seems*, and what is merely *given*. This the sense in which it is true that, on Hume's view, "consciousness never deceives" (E 7.3). Here are two passages where Hume expresses this view:

For since all actions and sensations of the mind are known to us by consciousness, they must necessarily appear in every particular what they are, and be what they appear. Every

³⁴ Here Hume might agree with Williamson (2000), at least if Williamson holds that not only do known propositions become part of one's total evidence but that they are evidence for themselves.

thing that enters the mind, being in *reality* a perception, 'tis impossible any thing shou'd to *feeling* appear different. This were to suppose, that even where we are most intimately conscious, we might be mistaken. (T 1.4.2.7)

The only existences, of which we are certain, are perceptions, which being immediately present to us by consciousness, command our strongest assent, and are the first foundation of all our conclusions. (T 1.4.2.47)

In passages like these, Hume cites our consciousness of our immediately present perceptions as what explains the impossibility of our erring about their apparent nature.³⁵ In the first passage above, it is because "all actions and sensations of the mind [i.e. immediately present perceptions] are known to us by consciousness" that "they must necessarily appear in every particular what they are, and be what they appear."³⁶

Hume utilizes this aspect of his position on many occasions by pressing his opponents to specify what it is like to experience something that they refer to, or at least to indicate how the relevant sort of experience could be realized. If they cannot, Hume takes that as irrefutable evidence that their claims lack positive content. For instance, when arguing for his own account of the origin of our ideas of causal "power or efficacy", Hume is insistent that we must "produce some instance, wherein the efficacy is plainly discoverable to the mind, and its operations obvious to our consciousness or sensation" (T 1.3.14.6). Hume does not even consider the possibility that we could experience causal "power or efficacy" without being conscious of it. This is because Hume denies that there are immediately present perceptions that we are unconscious of (in the sense that they do not *appear* or *seem* at all).³⁷

If one knows, then one must be certain of the intrinsic properties of the relata of the token knowledge relation at issue, and this is achievable only if those intrinsic properties are immediately present properties of an immediately present perception. Nowhere can error seep in. And, indeed, it is Hume's view that only the intrinsic properties of immediately present perceptions (their "qualities") are immediately present. As I will discuss in the next section, the properties that an immediately present being appears or seems to have are those that it must have at the time that it is immediately perceived, regardless of how it relates to other beings. These properties are its intrinsic properties.

4. Locating the immediately present in Hume's bundle theory

Skepticism about the external world is the view that one could not know, even in principle, any (non-logical) propositions about the external world. If the external world is everything ontologically distinct from one's mind and any of its parts, and if Hume's infallibilism requires that he maintain that both instances of knowledge and their objects are immediately present perceptions, it follows that we need to examine the relation between Hume's position on

³⁵ The other cases where Hume indicates this sort of view are T 1.1.1.1, T 1.2.6.2, T 1.3.9.15, T 1.3.14.6, T 1.3.14.10, T 1.4.7.3, E 2.3, E 7.11, E 7.13.

³⁶ Here Hume has a view similar to that of Berkeley, who asserts of our perceptions that "there is nothing in them but what is perceived" (*Principles* 25).

³⁷ Just like Berkeley with his "Ideas", per Stoneham 2018 (30).

the mind and his view on which beings are immediately present perceptions.³⁸ Is it an option for Hume to hold that some mind-independent beings (those that are ontologically distinct from the mind and any of its parts) could be immediately present perceptions? Answering this question requires a jaunt through the interpretative landscape surrounding Hume's position on the mind. It will be a jaunt rather than a military campaign because I will not attack or defend any particular interpretation. Rather than commit to a contested interpretation, I will present what are, in effect, a series of conditional claims.

One point of universal agreement amongst interpreters is that Hume is a bundle theorist about the mind. An old metaphor conveys the gist of what this means. Consider a theater where a performance is occurring. Either the mind is a spectator who is viewing the performance, or the mind is the performance itself. The distinction between the spectator and the performance mirrors the distinction between a subject and its objects. If the mind is like the spectator, then the mind is a subject, while if it is like the performance, then it is an object. The bundle theorist holds that the mind is like the performance. Prior to Hume, many philosophers presumed that the mind is a subject. Hume explicitly rejects this kind of view of the mind on numerous occasions.³⁹ Hume does not conceive of the mind as something distinct and fundamentally different from the objects of thought. In fact, Hume explicitly rejects it in connection with the theater metaphor:

The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. There is properly no *simplicity* in it at one time, nor *identity* in different; whatever natural propension we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity. The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is compos'd. (T 1.4.6.4)

The mind, for Hume, is a "bundle or collection of different perceptions" (T 1.4.6.4).⁴⁰ To put the matter in contemporary terms, Hume holds that (i) x is a mental state or mental object if, and only if, x is constituent or metaphysical part of the mind.⁴¹ A philosopher who maintains, by contrast, that the mind is a substance in the Cartesian sense must deny (i) since they hold that the mind has a metaphysical part which is not a mental state or mental object.

While (i) is universally attributed to Hume, much else is contested. Many interpreters do, however, agree that Hume holds that (ii) x is a mental state or mental object if, and only if, x is immediately present to the mind. Since it is universally agreed that Hume holds that if x is immediately present to the mind, then x is a perception, it follows from (ii) that if x is a mental state or mental object, then x is a perception. The bulk of interpreters also maintain that Hume endorses the converse of this last conditional, so, for them, 'perception' just is Hume's most

³⁸ Defining mind-independence (and thus the mind-independent world) in terms of ontological distinctness is necessary because it does not beg the question against one of the bundle theories under discussion in this section. A causal criterion would rule out the direct realist bundle theory discussed below.

³⁹ See T 1.1.6, T 1.4.3.1-7, T 1.4.5, and T 1.4.6.

⁴⁰ See also T 1.4.6.19, A 28, and T App.11-19.

⁴¹ Note that, throughout, I use ' x is a mental state or mental object' as a shorthand for ' x is a mental state or mental object, x is a part of a mental state or mental object, or x is a collection of mental state or mental objects'. I borrow the term 'metaphysical part' from Robert Pasnau (2011, 6-11). Metaphysical parts are parts of beings that are not constituents or "integral parts", including substantial forms, real accidents, and the like.

general term for mental states or objects.⁴² Nevertheless, as we will see, Hume must reject the converse of this last conditional if he is a direct realist. If Hume is a direct realist, then some perceptions are *not* always immediately present to the mind. I will explore the consequences of supposing that (ii) is not Hume's view later in this section, but first I will consider two alternative kinds of bundle theory interpretations.

The primary locus of internecine disagreement amongst interpreters who attribute (ii) to Hume is his position on another issue. This is the issue of whether Hume holds that (iii) x is represented by the mind if, and only if, x is immediately present to the mind. Hume considers two different views on (iii) and it is disputed which is his own. Members of the first kind of bundle theory interpretations are distinguished from members of the second kind by (iii). Specifically, they are those interpretations that attribute accounts of the mind to Hume that are compatible with the following doctrine (n.b. this is my own label for such interpretations):

Solipsistic Bundle Theory (SBT): (i) x is a mental state or mental object if, and only if, x is a constituent or metaphysical part of the mind; (ii) x is a mental state or mental object if, and only if, x is immediately present to the mind; and (iii) x is represented by the mind if, and only if, x is immediately present to the mind.

Understanding Hume's distinction between being represented by the mind and being immediately present to the mind is essential to understanding both (ii) and (iii). As discussed previously, Hume holds that we are conscious of the immediately present in a way that undermines the possibility that we err in misrepresenting its intrinsic properties at the time that we perceive it. By contrast, some being might be represented by the mind as the object of a mental state or mental object without being immediately present to the mind in any way, shape, or form. I could represent the moon via a mental state or mental object that is not identical to the

⁴² See, e.g., Passmore 1980 (85, 91), Seeman 1986 (392), Traiger 1988 (44), Garrett 1997 (11), Bennett 2002 (97), Strawson 2002 (234), Landy 2006 (119), Inukai 2011 (204-205), Cottrell 2015 (541), Garrett 2015 (2, 36), Cottrell 2018 (1-2), and Morris & Brown (2019). Note that, for these interpreters, it does not follow that those perceptions that are *not* mental states or mental objects could be perceptions when they are *not* immediately present to the mind—that would be a contradiction, given that Hume presumes that x is a perception if, and only if, x is immediately present to the mind. Only insofar as something is immediately present to the mind is it a perception. This issue must be addressed in light of confusions that may arise from Hume's temporary identification of 'perception' with 'object' from T 1.4.2.31 (when he says of the vulgar that he will temporarily "entirely conform myself to their manner of thinking and of expressing themselves") until T 1.4.2.46 (when he says he will once again "distinguish [...] betwixt perceptions and objects"). These are the main passages where Hume discusses direct realism (to be discussed later in this section). Those interpreters who maintain that x is a mental state or mental object if, and only if, x is a perception argue that the context of these passages shows that Hume's position is that any mind-independent being that is a perception could *not* be numerically identical to any mind-independent being that is *not* a perception, regardless of any qualitative identities or similarities they might enjoy. The vulgar are led to *believe* that there is some sort of identity (though crucially it is *not* a numerical identity) between such beings because of the qualitative identities and similarities they enjoy (i.e. the "coherence" and "constancy" of their qualities at different points in time). This is why the vulgar speak as if perceptions just are objects, which is an identification that Hume mirrors with his temporary identification of the terms. Now, were Hume himself to endorse direct realism, he would likely abandon his position that x is a perception if, and only if, x is immediately present to the mind. A more natural use of the terms 'perception' and 'object' under direct realism would be for 'perception' to stand for any mind-dependent being (e.g. a memory or a passion) and 'object' to stand for any mind-independent being (including those that are immediately present to the mind). Hence why many interpreters take the fact that Hume does not abandon his position to be strong evidence that he does not endorse direct realism. For discussion, see Yolton 1980 (153-157), Traiger 1988 (43-44), and Garrett 1997 (209-213).

moon (or any of its parts), and thereby have the moon represented by the mind without the moon being immediately present to mind. A clear case of this variety would be a case where my mental state or mental object is a memory. This mental state or mental object, which has the moon at some past time as an object, mediates my awareness of the moon. Since mediating representations may mislead, for present purposes the relevant part of the distinction can be cashed out in modal terms: it is possible that if, at some time t , x is represented by the mind but *not* immediately present to the mind, then, at t , either x does not exist or x is not as it is represented to be, but it is *not* possible that if, at some t , x is immediately present to the mind, then, at t , either x does not exist or x is not as it is represented to be.⁴³

The right-to-left direction of the biconditional (iii) is trivially true given that being immediately present is just a way of being represented. The other direction is not. The left-to-right direction of (iii) is what sets versions of the SBT apart since these views share (ii) with the second kind of bundle theory (to be discussed below). (ii) asserts that all and only mental states or mental objects are immediately present to the mind. The solipsistic aspect of versions of SBT is a consequence of (ii) and the left-to-right direction of (iii). Assuming x is a mental state or mental object if, and only if, x is immediately present to the mind, and assuming if x is represented by the mind, then x is immediately present to the mind, it follows that if x is represented by the mind, then x is a mental state or mental object. If what a mind takes to exist is circumscribed by what it can represent, then, under SBT, *everything* that a mind takes to exist is one of its mental state or mental objects.⁴⁴

There is much to be said about whether Hume really endorses the SBT.⁴⁵ There are passages which provide *prima facie* evidence for it.⁴⁶ Although the following passage undoubtedly represents an extreme in Hume's expressions of his position, and in it Hume gives an independent argument for the position he expresses, it is an instance where some interpreters have argued that Hume indicates that the SBT is his own view:

Now since nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions, and since all ideas are deriv'd from something antecedently present to the mind; it follows, that 'tis impossible for us so much as to conceive or form an idea of any thing specifically different from ideas and impressions. Let us fix our attention out of ourselves as much as possible: Let us chace our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe; we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear'd in that narrow compass. This is the universe of the imagination, nor have we any idea but what is there produc'd. (T 1.2.6.8)

Supposing for the sake of argument that the SBT is Hume's account of the mind, let us see how it interfaces with his infallibilism. Since Hume maintains that instances of knowledge and their objects are immediately present perceptions, the SBT forces Hume to endorse external world skepticism as a consequence. After all, external world skepticism follows from (i), (ii), and

⁴³ This way of expressing the distinction corresponds with prominent interpretations of Berkeley's view on immediate presence. See, e.g., Dicker 2006 (518) and Stoneham 2018 (29-31).

⁴⁴ As a consequence, versions of the SBT entail the "mental state view of experience". See Schellenberg 2010 (20-21).

⁴⁵ Those who interpret Hume as endorsing versions of the SBT include Thomas Reid (1997 [1764]), H.H. Price (1940), H.A. Prichard (1950), Simon Blackburn (2002), David Fate Norton (2002), Yumiko Inukai (2011), and Kenneth Winkler (2015).

⁴⁶ In addition to T 1.2.6.8 (quoted below), see T 1.3.5.2, T 1.4.2.1, T 1.4.2.47, T 1.4.2.56-57, and T 1.4.5.19.

this claim. The only objects of knowledge are immediately present perceptions, which are themselves constituents or metaphysical parts of one's own mind. Even in principle, it is not possible to know about anything distinct from one's own mind.

The second kind of bundle theories that Hume might endorse comply with the following doctrine:

Indirect Realist Bundle Theory (IRBT): (i) x is a mental state or mental object if, and only if, x is constituent or metaphysical part of the mind; (ii) x is a mental state or mental object if, and only if, x is immediately present to the mind; (iii_{RL}) if x is immediately present to the mind if, then x is represented by the mind; and (\sim iii_{LR}) it is not the case that, for all x , if x is represented by the mind, then x is immediately present to the mind.

The difference between the bundle theories compatible with the IRBT and those compatible with the SBT is that the former entail the right-to-left direction of (iii) but entail the negation of the left-to-right direction. Hume repeatedly asserts that the endorsement of (ii) and the denial of the left-to-right direction of (iii) are typical of philosophers of his era.⁴⁷ On this sort of view, the immediately present beings—one's perceptions—are the mind's constituent mental states and mental objects, as with the SBT, and anything mind-independent that it might be aware of must be an object of them. One never has any direct awareness of anything except one's own mental states or mental objects.

Locke defends a paradigm of this sort of view.⁴⁸ Locke responds to the classic arguments from perceptual relativity by endorsing (ii) but he nonetheless seeks to retain a robust form of representational realism. For example, Locke maintains that we are aware of mind-independent bodies, although our awareness of bodies is indirect and mediated because we are directly aware of only ideas that, at best, resemble and are caused by the relevant bodies.⁴⁹ Hume expresses this aspect of some versions of the IRBT in the following ways:

We may observe, that 'tis universally allow'd by philosophers, and is besides pretty obvious of itself, that nothing is ever really present with the mind but its perceptions or impressions and ideas, and that external objects become known to us only by those perceptions they occasion. To hate, to love, to think, to feel, to see; all this is nothing but to perceive. (T 1.2.6.7)

External objects are seen, and felt, and become present to the mind; that is, they acquire such a relation to a connected heap of perceptions, as to influence them very considerably in augmenting their number by present reflections and passions, and in storing the memory with ideas. The same continu'd and uninterrupted being may, therefore, be

⁴⁷ For such assertions, as well as Hume's account of the nature and psychological origins of this philosophical theory, see T 1.4.2.12-31 and T 1.4.2.44-55.

⁴⁸ For Locke's presentation of the view in the context of the primary-secondary quality distinction, see E II.viii.

⁴⁹ Those who interpret Hume as endorsing IRBT in this Lockean form include John Passmore (1980), Donald Livingston (1984), and Don Garrett (2006, 2015). Note that one could interpret Hume as denying this claim about resemblance but still maintaining the IRBT. One way Hume could do so would be to maintain that we represent mind-independent beings that are "specifically different" (T 1.2.6, T 1.4.2.2) from our perceptions with "relative ideas" (or by "supposing" that they exist, as opposed to "conceiving" them as such). Defenders of this non-resemblance version of the IRBT include John Wright (1983), Edward Craig (1987), Galen Strawson (1989, 2002), Fred Wilson (1989), and David Pears (1990).

sometimes present to the mind, and sometimes absent from it, without any real or essential change in the being itself. (T 1.4.2.40)

Suppose for the sake of argument that Hume endorses the IRBT. Since, again, Hume maintains that the objects of knowledge are immediately present perceptions, the IRBT does no better than the SBT in getting Hume out of external world skepticism. These two theories share (i) and (ii). Our knowledge extends only to our own mental states or mental objects.

Given the strictures of Hume's infallibilism, the indirect realist's endorsement of (\sim iii_{LR}) is no help. We cannot bootstrap our way to knowledge of mind-independent beings by knowing a relation that would guarantee that those beings are as we represent them to be. By Hume's lights, the relevant kind of relation would be resemblance, but since the relata of the relevant token resemblances would have to be the mind-independent beings themselves, it could not be known. After all, if Hume endorses (ii), then mind-independent beings are not identical to any mental state or mental object, and our knowledge extends only to our mental states or mental objects. There is nothing even God could do to give us knowledge of mind-independent beings if the IRBT is true.

Although most interpreters hold that Hume endorses a version of either the SBT or the IRBT, he does consider an alternative and, relative to my overall thesis, it is an extremely illuminating one. This alternative is the account of the mind that Hume maintains non-philosophers presume, including philosophers most of the time (those whom Hume calls the "vulgar"; this term is derived from a Latin word for 'common').⁵⁰ On this view, (i) is retained but the right-to-left direction of (ii) is denied. (iii) can be retained in either form discussed above (depending on the form endorsed, one ends up with one version of this view or another). That is, members of this third kind of bundle theory comply with the following doctrine:

Direct Realist Bundle Theory (DRBT): (i) x is a mental state or mental object if, and only if, x is constituent or metaphysical part of the mind; (ii_{LR}) if x is a mental state or mental object, then x is immediately present to the mind; and (\sim ii_{RL}) it is not the case that, for all x , if x is immediately present to the mind, then x is a mental state or mental object.

Under the DRBT, the mind is a proper subset of those beings which are immediately present. Hume is fascinated with the DRBT and spends significant effort trying to explain its psychological origins. However, Hume does not explore it as a viable philosophical theory because he presumes that it is simply a seductive illusion—easily dismissed by reason but worth diagnosing as a test of some features of his own account of belief.⁵¹ Some of Hume's successors—both immediate and contemporary—have criticized him at length for this approach.⁵² It is unfortunate that Hume fails to take it seriously, but we can fill in the gaps for him.

Given (i) and given that it is agreed on all hands that Hume holds that if x is immediately present to the mind, then x is a perception, it follows from the DRBT that some immediately

⁵⁰ Places where Hume uses 'vulgar' in this context T 1.4.2.12, T 1.4.2.14, T 1.4.2.17, T 1.4.2.31, T 1.4.2.38, T 1.4.2.43, T 1.4.2.46, T 1.4.2.49, T 1.4.2.53, and T 1.4.2.56.

⁵¹ For discussion, see Norton 2002 (373-376), Inukai 2011 (198-203), and Garrett 2015 (97-105).

⁵² Thomas Reid's sentiment is representative: "The theory of ideas, like the Trojan horse, had a specious appearance both of innocence and beauty; but if those philosophers had known that it carried in its belly death and destruction to all science and common sense, they would not have broken down their walls to give it admittance" (1997, 75-76). My attention was drawn to this quote by Rebecca Copenhaver (2004, 61).

present perceptions are *not* mental states or mental objects. Since immediate presence is the crucial property that explains our infallible access to our immediately present perceptions, the direct realist's endorsement of (\sim ii_{RL}) opens up a new avenue: namely, knowledge of immediately present perceptions that are mind-independent. While many interpreters hold that Hume was so convinced of (ii) that he did not consider this route as viable, if some being could be *both* immediately present to the mind *and* mind-independent, one could be aware of its intrinsic properties immediately and thereby know that a knowledge relation holds between its parts. Some of one's immediately present perceptions could be mind-independent beings and objects of knowledge. Given that skepticism about the external world is the view that one could not know, even in principle, any (non-logical) propositions about the external world, and the external world is everything other than one's mind, the negation of external world skepticism follows from the DRBT and Hume's infallibilism.⁵³

5. The DRBT, knowledge of the external world, and cognitive penetration

As of yet it is not clear what exactly can be known about the external world assuming both Hume's infallibilism and the DRBT. In this section I will give an interpretation of Hume's position on this issue. I will do so by analyzing the following case of sensory knowledge:

Fire Engines: Alex is walking through town and walks up to the front of a fire station. Looking from the sidewalk, Alex sees a large red fire engine with a ladder on top of it in one of the bays. In the bay next to it, Alex sees a medium-sized red fire engine. Given Alex's perspective, both fire engines are in her field of view at the same time, such that when she sees one, she sees the other.

Hume holds that a sensory impression is immediately visible to Alex. In contrast with ideas, impressions are perceptions that are original (i.e. not copied from others) and especially "vivacious" (i.e. phenomenologically intense), and this particular impression is complex since it has parts.⁵⁴ Crucially, some of the colors that Alex perceives resemble each other, like the red patches that she sees. The resemblance of the red patches is an object of Alex's impression. This means that, by Hume's lights, Alex has sensory knowledge that the red patches resemble each other. After all, Hume holds that resemblance is a knowledge relation; Hume holds that instances of knowledge are immediately present perceptions; and Hume holds that an immediately present perception is an instance of knowledge if, and only if, its object is an immediately present perception as well.

⁵³ For discussion of nearby terrain, see Pace 2008 and Hasan 2013. Note how the gap presumed by Pace (and Hasan, at points) between experience and (perceptual) beliefs about the external world—and so, given their presumption that knowledge entails belief, knowledge—would undermine any chance for Hume to avoid external world skepticism given his infallibilism.

⁵⁴ It is clear that sufficient vivacity alone does not make an idea into an impression—otherwise the memory could not be distinguished from the senses. The distinction between impressions and ideas is, instead, one between "original mental entities and copied mental entities" (Landy 2006, 119-120). For discussion, see Kemp Smith 1941 (209-212, 229-236), Garrett 1997 (11-40), Noonan 1999, Landy 2006, and Landy 2016 (275-280). I take this way of understanding the distinction solves many of the problems Everson (1988, 408-413) discusses, and that it may very well entail Everson's solution. In short, Everson cashes out the distinction via an appeal to the quality of being present; a similar account is given by Dauer (1999).

With this case in mind, consider the possibility of error under the DRBT. If it is possible that Alex has hallucinatory mental states or mental objects that are qualitatively identical to the collection of mind-independent objects that she would perceive under normal circumstances supposing the DRBT is true, then must there be some way for Alex to tell whether she is in such states?⁵⁵ The worry here is that, for every such state, Alex must be aware of its hallucinatory nature, for otherwise it seems that she would be in error about the object of her sensory knowledge. In normal circumstances, it seems that Alex's sensory knowledge in Fire Engines would be knowledge *that the mind-independent fire engines resemble one another with respect to redness*, while in the hallucinatory case, her sensory knowledge would be knowledge *that parts of her mental state or mental object resemble one another with respect to redness*. In both cases, Alex's sensory knowledge would be knowledge that patches of red resemble one another, but in one case, the patches are parts of mind-independent objects, while in the other case, they are parts of mental states or mental objects. Therefore, it seems crucial for her to be able to tell whether she is suffering from a hallucination.

Yet, in fact, it is *not* crucial, on Hume's view. The reason why it is not crucial is revealing, and it has to do with the following position of Hume's: a failsafe test of whether a token relation could be the object of an instance of knowledge is whether its contraries are contradictions. Hume argues that contraries of tokens of the knowledge relations are contradictions and so they are inconceivable.⁵⁶ A context where Hume utilizes this latter view is when he is arguing that God's existence is indemonstrable.⁵⁷ Hume argues that since God's nonexistence is conceivable, it is not a contrary of a token of a knowledge relation, so God's existence is not a token of a knowledge relation and cannot be demonstrated.⁵⁸

We can apply this test to the non-hallucinatory case from above. We can ask: are the contraries of the relation Alex supposedly sees under the DRBT contradictions? Clearly not. It is not contradictory for the mind-independent fire engines in question to fail to resemble one another with respect to redness. Indeed, we can plausibly stipulate that they failed to resemble one another with respect to redness during the three years that one of them was blue. And if the proposition is indexed to the time that Alex perceived the fire engines, we get the same result: it is not contradictory for the fire engines to fail to resemble each other with respect to their redness at any given time. Both of these propositions are conceivable. What, then, is the object of Alex's sensory knowledge in the non-hallucinatory version of Fire Engines under the DRBT?

⁵⁵ Disjunctivism is the view that there is *not* a "common kind" to which veridical, illusory, and hallucinatory perceptual experiences belong. This supposition, then, is the supposition that disjunctivism is false (n.b. it is a supposition that Hume would willingly make). See Hinton 1967, Hinton 1973, Snowdon 1981, McDowell 1982, and McDowell 1995. For an illuminating discussion of this domain, see Schellenberg 2011a. This supposition also entails that content externalism is false. Content externalism is the view that non-hallucinatory experiences of the mind-independent world have constitutive causal relations with the mind-independent world. For a defense of that view, see Putnam 1981. For discussion of related issues and infallibilism, see Dutant 2007.

⁵⁶ Perhaps the clearest expression of this view is in the following passage: "In that case, the person, who assents, not only conceives the ideas according to the proposition, but is necessarily determin'd to conceive them in that particular manner, either immediately or by the interposition of other ideas. Whatever is absurd is unintelligible; nor is it possible for the imagination to conceive any thing contrary to a demonstration" (T 1.3.7.3). See also T 1.3.9.10, E 4.2, and D 9.5. Recall that Hume maintains that tokens of the knowledge relations are propositions—this explains how their contraries can be contradictions. Also note that since, like Berkeley before him, Hume maintains that inconceivability due to the contradiction implies impossibility, it follows that contraries of tokens of the knowledge relations are impossible. For a recent analysis of Berkeley's position on inconceivability, see Holden 2019.

⁵⁷ Other contexts include T 1.3.7.3, T 1.3.9.10, A 11, and A 18.

⁵⁸ See D 9.5.

As previously discussed, tokens of the four kinds of knowledge relations qualify as objects of instances of knowledge because the intrinsic properties of their relata determine whether they hold or not. If one has the intrinsic properties of their relata in mind, one can be certain that they hold or that they do not hold. In the non-hallucinatory version of Fire Engines under the DRBT, the relevant intrinsic properties are the color properties, and Alex must be certain that they are intrinsic properties of whatever it is that she perceives. So, Alex's sensory knowledge extends as far as the intrinsic properties that, first, are perceivable and that, second, can enter into knowledge relations.

Which intrinsic properties are perceivable, on Hume's view? Hume's position is that, beyond the color properties, none of the properties of the relata that were included in the above candidate objects for Alex's knowledge—such as their being fire engines or mind-independent—were accessible by Alex at the moment of perception. Hume maintains that *only* colored points "dispos'd in a certain manner" (T 1.2.3.4) are immediately visible.⁵⁹ From the various contexts in which Hume uses the term, we can infer that 'disposition' is Hume's preferred term for the way in which the colored points are arranged in the two-dimensional arrays that constitute what is immediately visible at any given time.⁶⁰ (And, indeed, Hume explicitly denies in T 1.4.2.4 that mind-independence is immediately perceivable.) Being a fire engine or being mind-independent is *not* a perceivable intrinsic property of whatever it is that Alex perceives. These other properties are just like three-dimensional distance, which Hume, like Berkeley, denies is immediately present.⁶¹ This is one of the lessons of the hallucinatory version of Fire Engines: if it is in fact possible for Alex to have hallucinatory mental states or mental objects that are qualitatively identical to collections of the mind-independent objects that she would perceive under normal circumstances, then *neither* the mind-independence *nor* the mind-dependence of the objects would be perceivable in either case. And the same goes for whether she perceives the colored points *as fire engines* or not. If it is possible for Alex to *not* perceive parts of what she sees as fire engines, then the fire engine-ness of what she sees is *not* an intrinsic property of it.⁶²

Whether the DRBT is true or not, Alex's sensory knowledge in Fire Engines would be knowledge *that the red patches that are immediately present to her at that time resemble one another with respect to redness at that time*. (Perhaps the most neutral way to express this object of knowledge would be as *that those reds there resemble with respect to redness now*.) This relation is not itself a contradiction because it does not assert that the fire engines, their mind-independence, or their mind-dependence are immediately present. And its contraries are contradictory and inconceivable because, as we have seen, Hume holds that immediate presence is factive—if x 's being F is immediately present to S at t_1 , then it is true that x is F at t_1 . It is a contradiction that red patches that are red at some time do not resemble one another with respect to redness at that time.

In sum, then, Hume's restrictive views on sense perception combine with his infallibilism to severely constrain what could be the objects of Humean sensory knowledge. All forms of cognitive penetration, whether or not the cognitions in question involve the attribution of theory-laden philosophical properties like mind-independence, are barred from the outset and can only occur, if they do occur, during post-processing. Thus, how the prior section should be understood

⁵⁹ See also T 1.1.6.1 and T 1.1.7.18. For a thorough discussion of Hume's view, see Falkenstein 1997.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., T 1.2.3.5, T 1.2.5.8, and T 1.2.5.22.

⁶¹ See T 1.2.5. For discussion of this view of Berkeley's and related issues, see Stoneham 2018.

⁶² In this way, Hume is strongly opposed to what Susanna Schellenberg (2011b) calls 'the content thesis': namely, the view that "perceptual experience is fundamentally a matter of representing the world as being a certain way".

is as a philosophical analysis. Leaving Hume's views on color perception fixed, swapping out one kind of bundle theory for another does not change what Alex sees; rather, it changes how Hume would understand the metaphysical implications of what Alex sees. Just as an artwork can be interpreted in a variety of ways, so too can the arrays of colored points that are immediately visible to Alex in Fire Engines. This should not come as a surprise, either. If it were knowable (in Hume's sense), via sense perception, that something which entails $\sim ii_{RL}$ (the crucial claim of the DRBT) is true, then we would not need to argue about direct realism.

6. Conclusion

Several issues remain unaddressed. First, note that Hume must deny that the so-called 'KK (knows-knows) principle' is true, when instantiated to knowledge about the external world and otherwise. The KK principle states that for every object of knowledge, one knows that one knows it (or, alternatively, one is in a position to know that one knows it).⁶³ There are several reasons that Hume must deny this principle. Since Hume's account of knowledge does not require that one have higher-order awareness of what one knows *in any sense*, one does not necessarily know that one knows what one knows at the time that one knows it. And, once time passes, there are cases where one cannot know that one knew it since the object of this higher-order knowledge would be distinct from it. Furthermore, however one analyzes propositions of the form 'that S knows that *p*' in Hume's system, they are not knowledge relations. That one knows that *p* is not a resemblance, a proportion in quantity or number, a degree in a quality, or a contrariety.

Second, since Hume denies that sensory knowledge can be cognitively penetrated in any respect, a natural worry is that Alex's having of sensory knowledge under the DRBT is not sufficient for her to have knowledge *about* the external world. Although Alex knows that the two red patches resemble one another, one could argue that she does not know that the red patches are parts of mind-independent objects and that it is this further bit of knowledge which is necessary for her to have knowledge about the mind-independent world. This is, in effect, an objection to my defining external world skepticism as the view that one could not know, even in principle, any (non-logical) propositions about the external world. Since it is clear from the above analysis that Alex's knowledge entails the negation of this view, an objector could claim that this view is *not* the relevant one at issue in discussions of external world skepticism. The alternative view would be something like this: one could not know, even in principle, that there is a mind-independent world. It must be granted to this objector that the negation of external world skepticism of that variety is *not* entailed by Hume's position under the DRBT. Given Hume's position on the properties which are immediately present, Hume must be an external world skeptic of that variety.

Finally, the foregoing might make one wonder: what if Hume defended a different account of sense perception? If, in a drastic departure from his current position, Hume were to maintain that properties such as mind-independence or mind-dependence are similar to redness in being immediately perceivable, then Alex could, if the DRBT were true, perceive that the mind-independent fire engines resemble with respect to redness.⁶⁴ In fact, under such

⁶³ For relevant discussions of the KK principle, see Ginet 1970, Hall 1976, Feldman 1981, and Conn 2001.

⁶⁴ Those who maintain that experiences themselves represent "high-level content" or "high-level properties" maintain that properties like these are immediately perceivable. See, e.g., Prinz 2006, Siegel 2006, Bayne 2009, and

assumptions, Alex could perceive that the mind-independent fire engines resemble *with respect to mind-independence*.⁶⁵ This entails the negation of the alternative version of external world skepticism noted above, as well.

To conclude, Hume's infallibilism is an infallibilism indeed, and yet it does not entail external world skepticism unless we attribute to him other views about which beings (and which properties) are immediately present. Although some of those views are undoubtedly more likely to be Hume's views than others, Hume's endorsement of external world skepticism is only as likely as his endorsement of the views that must join with his infallibilism to entail it. Therefore, infallibilism does not necessarily entangle its defenders in external world skepticism.

Masrour 2011. Those who have positions similar to Hume's include Burge 2010 and Block 2014. See also Siegel & Byrne 2017.

⁶⁵ Note that this would probably mean that Hume would have to deny closure since, in this hypothetical, Alex would know some proposition about the external world without knowing the negation of all those propositions that entail its falsity. For discussion, see Greco 2007 (esp. 626-630), as well as Huemer 2000.

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Abbreviations

- 'T' book, part, section, paragraph from Hume's *Treatise* (Oxford, 2007), unless citation is from the Appendix main text, then the convention is 'T App' = paragraph, or unless citation is from the Appendix notes, then the convention is book, part, section, paragraph from Hume's *Treatise* with 'n' for note on the corresponding paragraph in the Appendix main text
- 'A' paragraph from the *Abstract* to Hume's *Treatise* (Oxford, 2007).
- 'E' when followed by Arabic numeral: section, paragraph from Hume's first *Enquiry* (Oxford, 2007).
- 'D' part, paragraph from Hume's *Dialogues* (Cambridge, 2007).
- 'E' when followed by Roman numeral: book, chapter, paragraph from Locke's *Essay* (Oxford, 1975).

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