
THE INTENT OF HUME'S DISCUSSION ON
THE EXISTENCE OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD

"UNDERSTANDING DAVID HUME"

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Abstract

Exploring the concept of the external world's existence has been a focal point within the domain of epistemological inquiry throughout the annals of philosophy. Numerous thinkers have grappled with the question of whether one can truly fathom the existence of the external world and, if so, how such comprehension can be attained. Among these intellectual explorers stands David Hume, who approaches our perceptions of the external world as deeply rooted in matters of belief. Hume critically examines the belief in the enduring and distinct presence of external entities, even when these entities escape active perception. This inquiry delves into the origins of the belief in an external world that persists independently of our cognitive processes and sensory experiences, probing the cognitive faculties responsible for shaping such convictions. Through this exploration, it is asserted that Hume's primary aim is to illuminate the epistemological significance embedded within such beliefs.

Introduction

Hume's thoughts on the existence of the external world are generally not well-known¹. The first book, fourth section, and second part of his work titled "An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding" are dedicated to this subject. In this section, Hume, with a skeptical approach, questions the belief in the continuous and constant existence of an object even when it is not perceived. After explicitly posing the question, "What reasons lead us to believe in the existence of the object?" he discusses both which faculty derives this belief and exposes the nature of the belief within his epistemological boundaries.

Hume's skepticism in this inquiry is evident from the section's title – "Skepticism with Regard to the Senses." Through his skepticism, he turns the external world into a philosophical problem; however, his skepticism does not address whether external objects actually exist.

According to Hume, even though the existence of external objects cannot be philosophically proven, it must be accepted; otherwise, any reasoning becomes impossible (2009: 133). Aune considers Hume's acceptance of the existence of the external world in intellectual inquiry as necessary for the development of correct theories (Aune, 1991: 59). Therefore, Hume avoids ontological questioning of the existence of the external world and instead focuses on the belief in the object's separate and continuous existence apart from perception². Perception is the only thing that constitutes the content of the mind, and there are two kinds of perceptions: impressions and ideas (Hume, 2009: 17). Since there is nothing in the mind other than impressions and ideas, external existence, apart from perceptions, is not comprehensible.

[...] we know external objects only through the perceptions they give rise to. [...] " Since there is nothing in the mind except perceptions, and all ideas are derived from things previously existing in the mind, the following conclusion can be drawn: It is impossible for us to conceive or form the design of anything of a different kind from our ideas and impressions (2009: 59)

While there is talk of a concept concerning the separate and continuous existence of external objects, this concept is incongruent with the criterion of perception. Indeed, it is thought that objects continue to exist separately from the mind even when not perceived. In this context, two questions

¹According to Price, Hume's thoughts on the external world and his skepticism have not been adequately appreciated in the history of philosophy. Price argues that the most significant reason for this is Hume's philosophy being approached from the perspective of Kant. Indeed, Kant did not discuss Hume's skepticism about the external world (Price, 1940: 2).

²According to Chappell, Hume has never directly engaged with ontology; however, it is understood that he holds views on existence from his philosophical works (Chappell, 1995: 77).

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capture Hume's attention: "Why do we attribute continuous existence to objects even when they are not presented to the senses?" and "Why do we assume that (objects) have an existence separate from the mind and perception?" (Hume, 2009: 134). In reality, these two questions are not independent of each other. To say that the objects of the senses continue to exist when not perceived is simultaneously to say that their existence is independent of and separate from perception. Despite the close relationship between these two questions, Hume still suggests addressing them separately, providing a more detailed examination of the belief in the separate and continuous existence of the external world. While charting the roadmap for this inquiry, he follows the traces of the faculty that generates the belief in the separate and continuous existence of the external world. As Baxter also noted, Hume's interest in this discussion is directed towards the workings of the human mind (Baxter, 2006: 116). By finding the faculty that generates it in the mind, he will explain the nature of this belief. In this regard, Hume pursues the paths of sensation, reason, and imagination. This study aims to follow in Hume's footsteps, identifying the faculty that generates this belief, elucidating his true intention in this discussion – to reinforce his thoughts on the nature of belief – and to strengthen the idea that belief cannot be rationally justified.

The Source of the Belief in the Separate and Continuous Existence of the External World from Perception

Hume, in search of the faculty that generates the belief in the existence of the external world when not perceived, examines sensation, reason, and imagination individually. Initially, he investigates whether the belief in the continuity of external existence is derived from the senses. The subject of this investigation is how the belief in the continued existence of the perceived object is derived after sensory perception is cut off, that is, when objects are no longer perceived. The continuity of the object's existence cannot be asserted based on the senses when the sensory process of perception is not in play. This would be a contradiction (Hume, 2009: 134). For example, I cannot claim that my design of a table in my room, which I perceive, is derived from the senses and perceptions when I do not perceive it. This is because the senses can only provide us with the perceptions at the moment they operate and cannot present anything beyond the scope of the current perception. Therefore, the senses "do not give us the concept of continuous existence because they cannot operate beyond the limit they are actually functioning" (Hume, 2009: 136). Consequently, it cannot be said that objects continue to exist based on the senses when they are not perceived. The same applies to the belief that objects have a separate and independent existence from perception. According to Hume, the senses convey only a single perception

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and "never give the slightest hint of anything beyond" (Hume, 2009: 134). The design of the object's separate existence in the mind is an inference about what is immediately visible to the mind, beyond the senses; it is a design beyond the senses. This situation regarding what is beyond perceptions demonstrates that the design of a separate and independent existence does not derive from the senses. To claim otherwise, that is, to say that the senses produce the design of separate and independent existence, is, according to Hume, a kind of "fallacy" and "illusion" (Hume, 2009: 134).

As for whether the belief in the separate and continuous existence of the object derives from reason, according to Hume, the matter is quite clear. There is no rational basis for this belief for both philosophers and ordinary individuals. Some philosophers may attempt to produce evidence to confirm the belief in the existence of objects separate from perception; however, in reality, philosophy informs us not about reasons to believe in the separate and independent existence of objects but rather "[...] tells us that everything perceived by the mind is only perception, subject to interruption, and dependent on the mind" (Hume, 2009: 137). Therefore, the evidence presented by philosophers cannot demonstrate that the belief in separate and continuous existence is derived from reason. Ordinary people or the vulgar explain this belief through causal reasoning. Causal reasoning is deducing one idea from another idea, causally. If the belief in the continuous and separate existence of the object were derived from causal reasoning, there should have been a continuous connection observed between perception and the external object; however, such continuous association cannot be observed because they are considered to be the same thing (Hume, 2009: 137). Therefore, for ordinary people as well, reason cannot generate the belief in the continuous and separate existence of objects not perceived.

Hume, reaching the conclusion that the belief in the continuous and separate existence of the object cannot be derived through a reasoning process, also wanted to convey something else. According to him, such a belief (for the vulgar) is not based on a cause-and-effect relationship or habit. Indeed, by stating that this belief comes from "a faculty other than our faculty of understanding" (Hume, 2009: 137), Hume revealed that this belief cannot be justified through reason and cannot be derived through cause-and-effect relationships related to matters of fact. Thus, it became apparent that, just like the senses, the mind also fails to generate the belief in the continuous and separate existence of the object, leaving the conclusion that this belief is derived by the imagination.

Since the belief in the continuous and separate existence of the object cannot be derived from sensation and reason, how can the imagination generate this belief? Hume addresses this question separately for philosophers and the vulgar because there are some differences in how belief is derived from imagination in these systems. Therefore, in our study, we will attempt to

distinguish and address the vulgar system and the philosopher's system separately.

Common System

According to Butler, Hume refers to the vulgar, those who are not engaged in philosophical reflection. Those who have never dealt with philosophy in their lives and philosophers who have abandoned philosophical reflection are included in this group (Butler, 2008: 117). Hume explains the belief of the vulgar in the object's existence separate from perception in accordance with his theory of impressions. According to him, two characteristics of the impression are at the source of this belief for the vulgar. These are constancy and coherence. The constancy attribute is based on the continuity of the object considered separate and continuous. If we consider the example given by Hume; mountains, houses, trees in front of my eyes always appear to me in the same order. When I do not perceive them with my eyes – perhaps when I close my eyes for a few minutes or turn my head – I perceive that they reappear to me in the same order. They do not change due to any interruption in my perception (Hume, 2009: 138). Stroud formulated this attribute (constancy) of the impression as follows: for example, when we have an uninterrupted series of impressions of the sun, our perceptual experience is AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA (1). However, if we close our eyes for a few seconds, our experience becomes AAAAAAAAAABBBAAAAAAAAA (2). In the first case, there is no interruption in perception, while in the second case, there is. Due to the similarity on both sides of the interruption in perception, we think that the perceptions of A are "individually" the same (Stroud, 1977: 101)³. This is because, due to the similarity, we believe that perceptions are the same perception and, therefore, the impressions' objects exist externally⁴. However, there are exceptional cases where continuity and similarity are lost between interrupted perceptions (such as ABCDE). Hume explains these exceptional cases through the coherence attribute of the impression.

At the core of the consistency of the impression, there are situations where objects change their place and qualities, temporarily disappear, and even after interruption, they may completely cease to be knowable. In this context, there is no similarity between the impression before the interruption in perception and the impression after. Even if there is no similarity between impressions, and even if there is a change, it is still believed that the changes involve a consistency, which is explained as the consistency attribute of the impression.

³Price has also made a formulation similar to Stroud's formulation. See Price, H. H. "Hume's Theory of the External World." London: Oxford University Press, 1940, p. 33.

⁴Indeed, Price draws attention to this. Price believes that what Hume calls the "constancy" attribute would be more accurately named "obstinacy in recurrence." According to him, what Hume is referring to here is not the unchanging perception of the same impression; rather, it is the continuity of similar impressions. See Price, 1940: 33.

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Objects frequently change their position and qualities, and after a brief disappearance or interruption, they may cease to be knowable altogether. However, it can be stated here that even these changes harbor a consistency and have regular dependencies among themselves. This situation forms the basis of a kind of reasoning based on causality and generates the view of their continuous existence (Hume, 2009: 138).

The consistency of the impression has two important aspects. Firstly, in consistency, there is a regular and continuous change between impressions, and this change is experienced systematically. According to Price, who compares consistency with the constancy attribute, the perception of similarity between individual impressions determines constancy, while in consistency, the perceived similarity between series of impressions, i.e., a series consistently observed in the past and a series observed in fragments now, becomes decisive (Price, 1940: 50). In other words, the perception of the consistency of impressions does not derive from the similarity between individual impressions but from the similarity between series of impressions. The second characteristic of the consistency of impressions is - as a result of the first - the generation of causal reasoning between impressions. Indeed, when we observe a continuous relationship between our impressions, we think that this relationship is a cause-and-effect relationship. For example, let's consider that I leave my room for an hour after lighting the fireplace. When I return to my room, I perceive my desk, bed, and pen as unchanged compared to the previous perception, but I perceive that the fire is about to go out, meaning it has changed. If this perception had occurred only once, it would not create the idea of consistency between impressions; however, after perceiving a similar change in the fire with several experiences in the same period, a habit forms in me that the same result will occur under the same conditions (Hume, 2009: 138). The reason for this habit is that impressions have been consistently perceived in the same order in the past.

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Price formulates the consistency of impressions as follows: Let's consider the series of impressions "A . . . E." I have no reason to establish a connection between two impressions (A and E); however, my previous experiences remind me that the impression E follows the impression A. Due to my past experiences, I consider intermediary impressions in the gap between "A . . . E," and in this case, I accept the expansion of the impression as "ABCDE" (Price, 1940: 35). When we apply Hume's example to this formulation, the impression A is the fire at the moment it starts burning in the fireplace, and the impression E is my perception of the fire about to go out when I return to my room an hour later. The impressions "BCD," that is, the fire first roaring and then gradually fading, are impressions that, according to my previous experiences, fill the gap between "A . . . E," that is, the interruption in perception. My memory helps me fill the gap between them and reminds me of past experiences. When I remember the situation of the fire in the "BCD" impressions, I fill the gap between the impressions "A" and "E," and I think that the fire continues to burn even though I did not perceive it, believing that the external object is independent of and continuous with my perceptions. Therefore, the consistency attribute of impressions, just like the thought arising from the constancy attribute in impressions, contributes to the belief of the vulgar (ordinary people) in the existence of external objects. As for how this belief is derived by the imagination, this issue is explained by two features of the imagination: establishing relationships between perceptions and giving them unity.

[. . .] to be able to relate the appearances of objects from the past and present at every moment and to give them a unity found through experience that is suitable for their specific structures and conditions has naturally been a means for me to be led to their continuous existence. At that point, I naturally tend to view the world as a real and continuous entity, maintaining its existence even when it is not before my perception (Hume, 2009: 139).

Imagination fills the gaps in the series of impressions that occur when they are not perceived by establishing relationships and giving them unity. At first

⁵However, as the discussion progresses, Hume argues that this belief derived from the consistency of impressions has a nature distinct from causal reasoning.

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glance, this relationship might be thought to be established by causal inference; because this relationship seems to be derived from habit and regulated by past experience. However, according to Hume, causal inference and inference arising from consistency are fundamentally quite different; this inference arises fundamentally from the faculty of understanding and habit indirectly. (Hume, 2009: 139).

Habit is a tendency arising from the continuous perception of impressions without requiring any process of reasoning or understanding (Hume, 2007: 32). Both causal reasoning and indirectly the source of belief in the external world is this tendency because they are formed with the tendency to transfer past experience to the future.

However, the situation of habit in the inference arising from consistency is different from causal reasoning; indeed, it is inferred from this that there is a greater regularity in certain unseen objects based on the regularity in our perceptions. If habit provided this inference, then this habit would have been acquired through perceptions that had never been presented to the mind, which would be a contradiction (Hume, 2009: 139). In this case, perceptions would have been interrupted, and the observation of the continuous associations of impressions would have become impossible. Therefore, this inference about the relationship between objects means relating them beyond perceptions and giving them a greater regularity than observed. This result shows that habit alone is not sufficient to produce this belief and that it requires the "cooperation of other principles" (Hume, 2009: 140).

According to Hume, this principle of imagination is such that it sustains mental activity without adhering to the objects perceived through experience. Although it proceeds from the consistency relationship of objects with the senses, it is not present before the mind at that moment, and interruptions between impressions are perceived. Imagination derives the assumption of the continuous and separate existence of the object to fill the gap arising from these interruptions. Because when the mind observes any uniformity, regularity among the objects of sensory experiences, even once, this uniformity is presented as if it were something complete until the assumption of their continuous existence. The assumption of the continuous existence of objects fills the gap arising from interruptions, as it provides a greater order. (Hume, 2009: 140).

[...] when imagination is placed into any train of thought, it is inclined to persist even when the object is not present, much like a galley propelled by oars that continues its progress without any new impulse. [...] The same principle easily leads us to adopt a view such as the continuous existence of an object, akin to the ease with which it continues its progress. (Hume, 2009: 140).

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Hume elucidates this principle of imagination through the metaphor of a "galley." According to Price, the issue here is how imagination can go beyond the actual regularities observed. He labels and explains this feature of imagination with the term "inertia of imagination," using Hume's galley metaphor. This principle enables imagination to make inferences beyond what is observed in the consistency inference; here, we imagine greater regularity than what we actually observe (Price, 1940: 57-58). Referring back to Hume's example of fire, believing in the continuous existence of the object even when it is not perceived, based on the changes in impressions A and E, is an inference reached by imagination without resorting to causal reasoning—specifically, it relies on the inertia of imagination. When we consider that A and E impressions, despite the interruption between them, maintain their relationships, "[...] and something else which we perceive not, is, it must be confessed, [...] mingled in the disorder of appearances" (Hume, 2009: 140), we are no longer talking about causal reasoning but about the inertia of imagination. In this case, the principle inferring the continuation of the relationship between BCD impressions is the principle of inertia of imagination. Loeb calls this principle – what Price refers to as the inertia of imagination – the cooperation of habit and galley (custom-and-galley).

This inference derived from the consistency of impressions is, indeed, a result of habit cooperating with the galley (Loeb, 2002: 186). Hume has proposed the galley as a principle that aids habit in generating this belief. In this regard, although Loeb's designation seems appropriate, calling this principle the inertia of imagination, as Price named it, is more fitting. This principle is inherently stable, much like a structure that cannot continue its course without being propelled by oars. It follows the path of inferring greater regularity with a calm demeanor. Collier characterizes this tendency of imagination as cognitive momentum; however, he argues that this principle, or, in other words, the galley metaphor, is insufficient to explain the capacity of imagination. According to Collier, Hume, through his metaphorical language, alluded to the qualities of imagination rather than fully explaining them (Collier, 1999: 159). Therefore, Hume acknowledges that the consistency of objects and the inertia of imagination alone fall short in explaining the belief in the continuous and separate existence of external objects.

However, no matter what force we attribute to it, I fear this principle would be weak in supporting such an extensive structure as the continuous existence of all external objects on its own. Therefore, to provide a satisfying explanation for that belief, we must add the continuity (invariability) of their appearances to the consistency of their impressions (Hume, 2009: 140).

While explaining that Hume derives the belief in the continuous and separate existence of external objects from the tranquility principle of imagination

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based on the consistency feature of impression, it is observed that he turns back to the principle of invariability of impression. Although Hume suggests considering the invariability feature as well as the consistency feature, subsequent discussions continue as discussions about the invariability feature of impression. Loeb evaluates this situation as Hume's dissatisfaction. According to him, Hume is not satisfied with the explanations regarding the belief in the continuous and separate existence of external objects derived from the inference about consistency. Especially, he might have been uncomfortable with the relationship between the imagination's consistency inference and the principle of tranquility, that is, tranquility. That's why he wanted to return to the invariability feature of imagination. While Loeb argues that Hume was dissatisfied with this result, attributing it to Hume's dissatisfaction with the explanations about believing in the continuous and separate existence of external objects derived from consistency. Even though Hume thinks that our belief in the existence of external objects is derived from something broader and more than the inference based on consistency, we can argue that it is more of an academic inclination and a tendency to delve into questioning rather than dissatisfaction or dissatisfaction. Indeed, when Hume hints that the need to reconsider the invariability feature of perceptions will lead him to "very deep speculations," he suggests that his questioning will have a more academic content.

Summarizing again how the perception of invariability and continuity is formed in impressions, Hume draws attention to a point that is not present in the consistency features of perceptions. This feature is the perception of impressions as perfect identity. According to Hume, common people perceive invariability in certain impressions. For example, we perceive the Sun or the ocean again in a similar order, just as we did in their initial appearances, after a perceptual interruption. "[...] they show no inclination to view these interrupted perceptions separately (which, in fact, they are), but, on the contrary, we count them as individually the same because of their similarities." (Hume, 2009: 141). We think that interrupted perceptions are individually the same, even carrying perfect identity. The reason for thinking this is the conflicting situation, i.e., unrest, that arises in us when interrupted perceptions are not accepted as one and the same. To eliminate this unrest, we do not think that the first impression disappeared, and the second impression was recreated. Instead, we "[...] as much as possible conceal the interruption, or rather entirely remove it by assuming that these interrupted perceptions are united by a real existence that we do not perceive." (Hume, 2009: 141). Thus, assuming their continuous and separate existence by assuming that the gap between perceptions caused by the interruption is closed. According to Hume, this assumption is more than an assumption; because it is a strong and vivid design. This design derives its power and vivacity from designs in memory. In this way, a similarity is perceived between the first and second impressions; they are believed to be one and the same.

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The ability of imagination that enables one to believe in the persistence and sameness (identity) of an object despite interruptions is the fabrication (a fiction of imagination) of imagination (Hume, 2009: 142); because imagination, by applying time to the design of the unchanging object, establishes an identity relationship between perceptions of objects over time. When I look out of the window, despite the immutability of the house across, I perceive the leaves of the trees in the garden moving in the wind and the birds flying above. However, despite the changing perceptions, I think that the house is unchanging, that is, I believe that the current perception of the house is identical to the perception five minutes ago. Based on this, according to Hume, the belief that the object remains unchanged and uninterrupted over time for the common people is a "fabrication" or an "assumption." In reality, we have no experience that responds to this design. Therefore, the design of identity is nothing more than a fabrication of imagination. Thus, Hume explains how we have the imagination's design of an unchanging and uninterrupted object/belief. In other words, he presents the belief of the common people in the separate and continuous existence of the external world from perception as a false production of the natural operation of imagination. (Hume, 2009: 143). Indeed, Price and Noonan claim that Hume summarizes the source of the common people's false belief with this discussion (Price, 1940: 40; Noonan, 1999: 177). Especially considering Hume's thoughts on imagination, Price and Noonan's observations are quite acceptable because Hume reveals the effect of imagination on producing erroneous and delusional beliefs with this discussion. Despite interrupted perception, the common people maintain a false belief by believing that objects are identical and exist separately and continuously from perception. Imagination accomplishes this by providing a smooth transition between interrupted perceptions.

It provides a smooth transition from impression to design and even imparts a propensity to that transition. The mind easily transitions from one perception to another, often not perceiving the change but maintaining a significant portion of the vivacity of the first in the second. Again, the mind is stimulated by a lively impression; due to the smooth transfer in the past and the inclination of the imagination, the vitality is conveyed to the related design without significant loss (Hume, 2009: 146).

The reason for the belief in the design of an assumed object is the similarity relationship between perceptions. The impression enhances the vivacity of such an object through the similarity relationship and contributes to its belief. When I look outside my room, I often perceive houses, mountains, and trees. Now, if I look out the window again, the imagination smoothly conveys the lively impression of houses, mountains, and trees to my mind, linking it to past designs. In the transfer process of imagination, the facilitating ability, concerning the relationship with past designs, is memory.

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Memory provides imagination with numerous examples of perceptions that closely resemble each other. These examples are similar instances returning after different time intervals and interruptions between perceptions. The similar examples presented by memory give us two things: first, a tendency to see interrupted perceptions as the same, that is, identical; second, a tendency to fill the gaps caused by interruptions in perceptions with the assumption of continuous existence (Hume, 2009: 147). The first tendency is a misconception, a faulty transition of imagination, as mentioned earlier; the second is, according to Hume, an invention of imagination (Hume, 2009: 146). Whether called a misconception or invention, it is observed that the examples from memory animate the design. These examples from memory give liveliness to the imagination's construction and lead us to believe. Thus, we believe that these objects continue to exist separately. However, all of this applies to situations we have experienced before, situations for which we have acquired a certain design. Sometimes, we acquire impressions that are entirely new to us, that we have not experienced before. We have no experience regarding their permanence and consistency, yet we still attribute continuity to these objects. According to Hume, "[...] the reason is that the manner in which they present themselves to our senses resembles that of consistent and continuous objects; this resemblance is a source of reasoning and analogy, leading us to attribute the same qualities to similar objects" (Hume, 2009: 147). In other words, the reason we attribute continuity to an object we perceive for the first time is that its perception resembles that of consistent and continuous objects. Imagination conveys this relationship to the perception, giving it liveliness, and thus, we attribute continuous existence to it, just like objects we think are consistent and unchanging. For example, let's assume that I have acquired a perception A that I have not experienced before. I have no design regarding the A object, but the way I perceive it reminds me of the consistency feature of my previous designs of houses, mountains, and trees. Later, due to this similarity, I attribute continuity to the A object, just like objects such as houses, mountains, and trees, which I think are consistent. Here, it should be noted that this belief is a fiction, an assumption. Hume shows that, according to his skepticism, there is no reason for us to trust these beliefs since the source of the belief in the continuous existence of the object (due to imagination) is an error and a fiction. Here, one might ask Hume the following question: If the belief in the continuous existence of the object is based on imagination, producing fictional and illusory beliefs, how can we trust these beliefs? From Hume's skeptical perspective, this question, which will be explained, will better highlight that there is no reason for us to trust these beliefs.

Philosopher System

After discussing how the common people, according to Hume, attribute continuous and separate existence to objects, the philosopher questions how the belief in external objects is derived. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, this belief cannot be derived from sense and reason for both the philosopher and the common people. Aside from sense and reason, the other source from which this belief can be derived is imagination. Indeed, Hume explains the belief of the common people through the natural inclination of imagination. Therefore, in this section, the derivation of the philosopher's belief in the continuous and separate existence of external objects from imagination will be addressed. However, before that, it is necessary to outline the understandings of objects for both the common people and the philosopher.

According to Hume, the philosopher's understanding of objects is different from that of the common people or ordinary individuals. For the common people, the object and its perception are the same. In other words, the common people believe that they perceive a single entity without making any distinction between the object and perception. They accept all the objects they acquire through sensation as real objects (Hume, 2009: 143). As for the philosopher's perception of objects, Hume explains the philosopher's thought with the concept pair he calls "double existence" (Hume, 2009: 148). This discussion is often referred to in Hume literature as the "double existence theory" (Price, 1940: 124; Fogelin, 2009: 230; Dicker, 1998: 167)⁶.

According to the theory of double existence, our perceptions are both discontinuous, disappearing, and different with each new turn; and at the same time, these perceptions represent an object that exists independently of the mind. In other words, double existence implies that perceptions are constantly changing but objects continue to exist uninterrupted. In this case, a philosophical distinction between perception and object is observed. Dicker explains Hume's theory of double existence through three propositions: (1) Sensory objects are bodies. (2) Sensory objects have continuous existence. (3) Bodies have continuous existence. According to Dicker, the common system accepts all three propositions as true, and Hume thinks that the common system incorrectly believes in the (2) proposition, as mentioned in the previous section. The philosopher system recognizes that (2) is a flawed proposition. However, by denying (2) in the common system and following propositions (1) and (3), the philosophical system faces a contradiction. To resolve this contradiction, the philosophical system puts forward the theory of

⁶There are commentators in the literature who interpret Hume's thoughts not as a "theory" but as a "double existence design" or "double existence hypothesis." Hume himself does not refer to it as either a theory, design, or hypothesis. The terminology chosen by commentators seems to be based on preference and is related to colloquial language. Due to the widespread use and the inconvenience of using the term pair alone, in this study, we also prefer to call it a theory.

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double existence and, by denying (1) as well, follows these three propositions: (1) Sensory objects are our own sensory impressions. (2) Sensory objects have intermittent existence. (3) Bodies have continuous existence. Therefore, according to the theory of double existence, sensory objects are both continuous and intermittent in existence (Dicker, 1998: 175-176). That is, they are both an impression and something outside the mind; they are both the perceptions of the mind and something not perceived. Thus, the situation seems more contradictory, and in fact, the philosophical system "[...] with some other difficulties peculiar to it, encompasses all the difficulties of the ordinary system" (Hume, 2009: 148). Indeed, while the philosophical system may intend to alleviate the contradictory situation arising from the common belief, it actually poses more problems. This problematic structure in the philosophical system requires further explanation of the theory of double existence.

Hume addresses two points in the theory of double existence. Firstly, (a) "there is no principle in the faculty of understanding or imagination that directly leads us to accept the view of the double existence of these perceptions and objects." Secondly, (b) "[...] besides, we cannot arrive at that view without passing through the ordinary assumption of the identity and continuity of our intermittent perceptions." (Hume, 2009: 148) Hume discusses the first point in two stages. In the first stage, the issue he discusses is that (x) reason or the faculty of understanding cannot provide any justification for the philosophical system. The second stage addresses the issue of (y) that the theory of double existence cannot be primarily a product of imagination. As we follow the order in which Hume addresses the issue, first, as mentioned earlier, we need to examine the point (x) that the reason cannot justify the theory of double existence.

The only existence we are certain of is perceptions; they receive our strongest endorsement since they are directly presented to us through consciousness and form the basis of all our judgments. The sole argument we can derive concerning the existence of one thing over another is created through a cause-and-effect relationship that demonstrates a connection between them and the dependency of one's existence on the other (Hume, 2009: 149).

Reason cannot generate the idea of double existence because there is nothing in the mind except perceptions, and we cannot derive a conclusion about the existence of objects from the existence of perceptions. Since the subject concerns the existence of objects, any inference we make would be a causal inference related to "matters of fact." For a causal inference or cause-and-effect relationship, there must be a constant conjunction of perceptions and their simultaneous presentation to the mind. However, since there is nothing in the mind other than perceptions, we cannot observe the

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constant conjunction of perceptions or the cause-and-effect relationship.

Therefore, "[...] it is impossible for us to form any argument from the existence or qualities of perceptions to the existence of objects, or to satisfy our reason in this particular" (Hume, 2009: 149). Thus, reason cannot lead us to the view of the double existence of perceptions and objects.

When it comes to the inability to derive the double existence of perceptions and objects primarily and directly from the imagination (y), Hume argues that this issue "contains a negation which will not admit of any positive proof" (Hume, 2009: 149). Let's assume that our perceptions are disjointed, intermittent, and, no matter how much they resemble each other, still different from each other. However, at the same time, let's assume that the imagination transitions to the belief in another existence that is continuous, intermittent, and identical to these perceptions. In the first assumption, there is no situation that the imagination can process because this assumption is a result of sensible perceptions. In the second assumption, as seen in the common system, the continuous and separate existence of the object is accepted through the transitions of the imagination. However, according to Hume, the common and widespread view in the common system is a misconception. Indeed, assuming that our perceptions continue to exist even when they are not perceived is a mistake because, as previously discussed, this assumption is the source of the common system's belief in the continuous and independent object. This assumption still appears to be alive within the philosophical system, and the design of the external object in the philosophical system, namely the theory of double existence, carries an indirect influence of the imagination. This effect is the result of the interaction between the philosophical system and the common system. Indeed, the philosophical system is in interaction and relation with the common system. At this point, one might ask how the philosophical system interacts with the common system, and this question leads us to the second explanation of Hume, namely how the philosophical system is derived from the assumption of the common system (b).

In the common system, although our perceptions are considered intermittent in their appearances, they are assumed to be identical and accepted with the principle of identity, and it is believed that our sensible perceptions have continuous and uninterrupted existences. According to Hume, when this assumption is contemplated a bit, the result is the conclusion that perceptions in the philosophical system have a dependent existence on the mind. This result eliminates the assumption of the continuous existence of perceptions in the common system. In this case, the denial of the assumption that the object continues to exist even when it is not perceived is expected. However, according to Hume, the situation is not like that because philosophers cannot fully deny the view of "continuous existence," even if they reject the independence and continuity of perceptions. Except for a few extreme skeptics—whom Hume considers to have only resorted to verbal denial and

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not fully believed it—this assumption has persisted both in the common and philosophical systems. According to Hume, what continues to perpetuate the view of continuous existence and hinders progress in the philosophical system is nature. Even if it is understood that perceptions are dependent on the mind and intermittent, nature prevents the denial of independent and continuous existence because the belief in continuous existence is so deeply rooted in the imagination that "it is impossible to efface it in any manner whatsoever" (Hume, 2009, 150). Nature prevents us from being skeptical about the continuous existence of entities. Thus, the idea of the double existence of objects can be sustained.

According to Hume, the philosophical assumption about the double existence of objects has been made consistent with both reason and imagination. The assumption of double existence satisfies reason by asserting that our perceptions, which are dependent on the mind, are intermittent and different. Simultaneously, it pleases the imagination by attributing continuous existence to objects (Hume, 2009: 150). Indeed, reason claims that, despite similar perceptions, our perceptions are intermittent and different, while imagination, starting from similar perceptions, asserts that these perceptions are continuous and uninterrupted, meaning that they continue to exist even when not perceived. Therefore, this assumption is a product of two opposing but mutually non-eliminating faculties: reason and imagination (Hume, 2009: 150). Under the influence of reason and imagination, we attribute intermittency to perceptions and continuity to objects (Hume, 2009: 151). Faced with the contradictory statements of reason and nature, we try to escape the unrest by creating an assumption that satisfies both reason and nature⁷. Hume's theory of double existence precisely corresponds to this attempt.

Nature is stubborn, and no matter how strong an attack the understanding may launch, it does not surrender the fortress. Simultaneously, the understanding is so exposed in this regard that there is no possibility of concealing it. When we fail to reconcile these two adversaries, we attempt to appease each in turn by creating a dual existence that provides them with what they want, allowing ourselves to find something that meets all the conditions, and trying to comfort ourselves as much as possible (Hume, 2009: 151).

If the common system had sufficiently convinced us that the perceptions in the designs of the continuous existence of an object are identical and

⁷According to Hume, whenever the philosopher leaves his room, he, like the common people, erroneously agrees that our perceptions are our only objects, that despite their intermittent appearances, they bear identity, and that they continue to exist continuously. The reason for this is the compulsion imposed by nature, forcing us to believe in it (Hume, 2009: 151).

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independent, we would not need the dual existence theory. Similarly, if we were fully convinced that perceptions are mind-dependent, intermittent, and distinct, we would also not accept the dual existence theory. According to

Hume, this situation arises from the ambivalence of the mind; thus, we reconcile two opposing principles like imagination and understanding (Hume, 2009: 151). In the absence of such reconciliation, whenever we encounter a contradiction, imagination makes some transitions to quell the unrest of the mind. This transition occurs due to the relationship of similarity between the object and perception, forming the design of the continuous existence of the object. Thus, Hume suggests that the explanations of external existences in both the common and philosophical systems are hypotheticalal.

Conclusion

Hume's intention in the discussion of the external objects' existence, separate from perception and continuously enduring, becomes evident when questioning the reliability of our beliefs based on imagination. Through skepticism, he believes that imagination's judgments produce illusions and errors. Considering both the common and philosophical systems, he focuses on how this belief can be "justifiably inferred" (Hume, 2009: 152). In other words, he investigates how the judgments and beliefs hypothetically constructed by imagination can be justified because these assumptions seem unfounded. The belief in the continuous and separate existence of external objects, being a product of the imaginative faculty, not derived from reason or senses, can be considered an indication that it cannot be epistemologically justified.

Assuming that perceptions belong to the same object due to their similarities, i.e., assuming the continuous existence of the object, is a result of the fictitious nature of imagination. Otherwise, thinking that each perception is distinct from the others and that the object does not continuously exist creates discomfort in the mind. Imagination assumes continuous existence to eliminate the unease in the mind, which also explains why we maintain our belief in the continuous existence of external objects. If someone rejects this belief in continuous existence, it cannot be expected for them to make inferences about the external world. As Costa noted, avoiding such a belief is not only difficult but expressing such avoidance is psychologically impossible due to the inclinations of imagination (Costa, 1995: 561). While we may not epistemologically justify the belief in continuous existence through reason, we continue to affirm it due to psychological necessity. With this discussion, it can be argued that Hume's primary goal is to demonstrate, through a skeptical approach, that the evidence for the existence of external objects cannot be epistemologically justified through reason, revealing the epistemic value of belief.

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