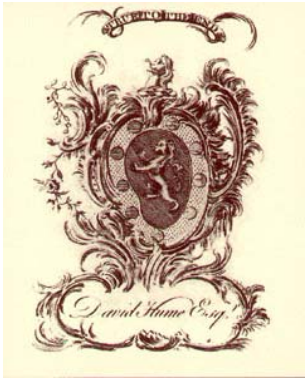

Hume’s Naturalized Philosophy
Yves Michaud
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HUME'S NATURALIZED PHILOSOPHY

In "Epistemology Naturalized," Quine claimed that the failure of reductive-foundationalist attempts in epistemology, after the model of Carnap's Aufbau, must lead to a redefinition of epistemology's task.[1] Instead of setting out to reconstruct the whole fabric of our knowledge from absolute data through deductive operations, we should investigate how human subjects derive their knowledge of nature from sensory inputs. Thus epistemology is to be conceived as a branch of natural science, cognate with psychology, not as the study of the foundations of science any more.

In the present paper, I will first outline Quine's position and his related interpretation of Hume's philosophical enterprise. Then, I will try to assess the relevance and fairness of Quine's account and consider in what measure it allows us to understand the novelty of Hume's conception of philosophy, since Hume also advocated a non-foundationalist conception of philosophy which bears some striking analogy to naturalized epistemology. Finally, I will suggest which consequences are to be drawn from this unusual view of Hume, especially as regards the self-reference of philosophy.

I

Quine's position in the matter of epistemology is well known. For him, under its traditional form and program, epistemology used to deal with the foundations of science, be it mathematics or the science of nature. This foundationalist approach had two connected aspects, one which Quine calls conceptual; the other he calls doctrinal. As Quine

puts it "the conceptual studies are concerned with clarifying concepts by defining them, some in terms of others" (Quine, p. 69). In the same manner, the doctrinal studies attempt to establish laws "by proving them, some on the basis of others" (Quine, p. 69). Derivative concepts will be defined in terms of the clearer ones and complex laws will be proved from primitive and obvious ones.

Thus the traditional or classical conception of epistemology involves simultaneously a theory of concepts or meanings and a theory of truth. These two branches (Quine speaks of a duality of structure or bifurcation) converge so as to provide an analysis of the way our knowledge of nature -- and our knowledge in general -- stems from and is built upon our sensory experience which validates it. In so characterizing epistemology, Quine simply restates in his own terms the foundationalist and reductivist program of positivist epistemology, which itself tied in with the logicist program in mathematics. Then Quine suggests that Hume dealt with both sides of this program, the conceptual and the doctrinal.

To begin with, Hume developed what might be called a theory of concepts or meanings in terms of our sensory data. Such is the point of his theory of ideas which consists in tracing them back to the original impressions they are derived from. In spite of its limitations, which hinge on the lack of an approach in terms of statements, Hume's phenomenalism does the job of a theory of meaning and concepts.

Hume also attempted to give an answer to the question of the truth of our knowledge. In this case again, his phenomenalist stand allows him to account for the truth of our singular statements concerning our perceptions, even though this result is achieved at the cost of identifying objects and sensory data.

However, when Hume comes to general statements and singular statements concerning future events, his attempt fails. This is not surprising. According to Quine, if it were possible to improve on Hume's theory of meaning and concepts, especially through the use of contextual definition techniques, by contrast, all the attempts to logically derive the truth of our knowledge from true premises have failed. In matter of induction, we are not one step further than Hume was. "The most modest of generalizations about observable traits will cover more cases than its utterer can have had occasions actually to observe. The hopelessness of grounding natural science upon immediate experience in a firmly logical way was acknowledged" (Quine, p. 74). Or "the Humean predicament is the human predicament."

For Quine, foundationalist attempts of the sort Hume engaged in involve two cardinal principles of empiricism which remain unchallenged. One of these principles is to the effect that whatever evidence there is for science is sensory evidence. The other principle claims that all inculcation of meanings of words must rest ultimately on sensory evidence. It is not a question of rejecting purely and simply these principles. At any rate, they have played and still play a decisive role in all the reconstructive undertakings, even once it has been acknowledged that a strictly logical derivation of our knowledge is out of reach. We must rather decide whether to adopt a strict conception of these principles or not. Quine, for his part, advocates a moderate interpretation of them.

I will not linger on the failure of the logical derivation of our knowledge from sensory experience: as Quine puts it, it is as illusory to pretend to derive the truths of the science of nature

from immediate experience as it is to attempt to derive the whole of mathematical truths from elementary logic. With respect to the second part of the reductivist program, the conceptual one, it is likewise impossible to translate -- or retranslate as one would have it -- concepts into primitive observational terms for the simple reason that the empirical meanings of basic statements concerning the external world are "inaccessible and ineffable." Here we run into Quine's theses concerning the indeterminacy of translation. One can never check a statement and the meanings which occur in it against a determinate and identifiable experience of objects and qualities. We always check a certain amount or bulk of theory against a set of experiential implications and consequences. Only a certain mass of theory can be said to be empirically meaningful and verifiable.

Now, if we are to renounce the project of a deductive derivation and sensory foundation of our complex scientific statements, if we cannot rely on primitive and elementary concepts and basic reports of facts, what is left of traditional epistemology and its foundationalist projects? Quine thinks that a weaker program may be substituted for it: such is the program of naturalized epistemology. In fact, the expression of 'weaker program' is improper. Of course, naturalized epistemology does not renounce the two principles of empiricism we have just examined. It stands by a verificationist conception of meaning and claims that, whatever be the indeterminacy of translation, sensory experience alone allows us to justify and check the bulk of our theoretical constructions. However, the program and the pretensions of epistemology are so dramatically changed that we now deal with a totally new discipline, "in a new setting and a clarified status"

(Quine, p. 82). Epistemology is turned into a chapter of psychology and merges into natural science. It now studies -- which means describes -- in what way the human subject reacts theoretically to sensory inputs, in what manner theories may be viewed as reactions to sensory stimulations.

The decisive change comes from the fact that epistemology thus naturalized is immersed in the science of nature. In its turn, it has to be understood as a construction, or better as a reactive construction, which obeys the same processes and stems from the same stimulations which prompts the subject's theoretical outputs: "We are after an understanding of science as an institution or process in the world, and we do not intend that understanding to be any better than the science which is its object" (Quine, p. 84). Thus epistemology loses its privileged position; it joins up with the rest of sciences. It is naturalized.

Until now I have simply summarized Quine's conception of epistemology. I do not wish to compare Hume and Quine. Rather, I would like to consider to what extent Quine's remarks concerning Hume and naturalized epistemology are fair to Hume and to what extent they help us to understand his philosophical undertakings.

II

All in all, it seems to me that Quine's remarks are a fair and perceptive appraisal of Hume's main philosophical points. We simply should draw the correct conclusions from Quine's interpretation.

To stick to Quine's distinctions, in the matter of doctrinal foundation Hume obviously entertained the idea that we cannot derive our

general statements or our singular statements concerning the future from our sensory data alone. Such is the well-known outcome of Hume's analysis of causality and induction which concludes that a certain number of principles of human nature must supplement the original stock of sensory data if we are to account for the main features of our experience. In spite of the muddling effects of the neo-empiricist readings of Hume, one must be blind to miss the various propensities, tendencies, dispositions and associations that Hume so generously draws on in the course of his analyses. From a methodological point of view, empiricism requires that we limit ourselves to sensory data. Accordingly Hume complies with this methodological program, but it leads him to acknowledge that in fact we continuously go beyond sensory experience. Empiricism demonstrates its own limitations. One would find a similar drift in Bertrand Russell's philosophy in which anti-empiricist elements and empiricist program intertwine.

If we consider now the conceptual side of epistemology, it also is beyond doubt that Hume entertained the reductivist dogma which Quine identifies as the basis of foundationalist approaches. Hume's analysis of ideas into simple and complex ones, and his demand for the identification of the original impressions which validate simple ideas, form one of the basic tenets of his philosophy. The principle of priority of impressions to ideas is the first maxim of the science of human nature. It does the job of a principle of verification of meanings. Even though Hume conceives of it in the light of his atomist and phenomenalist commitments, the construction of complex ideas is more complicated and sophisticated than one resulting

from mere associations owing to all the tendencies, dispositions and propensities which supplement the stock of our perceptions. Hume also believes that any evidence for our knowledge must ultimately come from sensory data and that any inculcation of meanings of words rests on sensory evidence.

It is a debatable question whether Hume entertained a distinction which might be compared to the one between analytic and synthetic statements. Strictly speaking I think that we must answer negatively, if only because of the fuzzy character of Hume's views concerning mathematics and because of his lack of logical tools. Yet, Hume thinks that we can always decide whether a statement concerns facts or ideas. He also thinks that factual statements can be successfully verified by the pointing out of the corresponding sensory impressions and that statements concerning ideas can be verified by the analysis of these ideas. An indirect and interesting consequence of Quine's views concerning the indeterminacy of translation is that it allows us to understand that Hume's very conception of the atomic nature of meanings finally does the job of a distinction between synthetic and analytic: every statement can be checked against an identifiable and determined set of data, be they impressions or ideas. Even though Hume does not entertain an explicit dogma of analyticity, he claims that we always are in a position to ascertain what makes possible the understanding of sentences: some definite impressions and/or ideas.

For all that, ironically and unexpectedly enough, Hume's views do not result in a straightforward version of traditional epistemology. On the contrary, they are part of a conceptual framework

which is not far from Quine's conceptions regarding the ordinary status of epistemology as a natural science. How is it possible?

Hume's basic empiricism, his atomism, his strong distaste and aversion for metaphysics and verbal illusions tend to support a foundationalist and reductivist conception of philosophy in the field of knowledge. The standard neo-empiricist interpretations of Hume's philosophy have focused on this aspect and in so doing they were not wrong. However, in absolute contrast to this standard view, because Hume also acknowledges both the true import and limitations of the empiricist program and the failure of our attempt at deriving all our knowledge from experience, he departs considerably from foundationalism and engages instead in a type of philosophical activity which may be viewed as naturalized in the Quinean sense.

It is hard to understand why the obvious complexity of Hume's statement of intentions in the introduction to the Treatise is not taken more seriously. Likewise, why not take seriously the sceptical positions of the conclusion of the first book and the dogmatic but unphilosophical stand of the last section of the Enquiry? In his introduction to the Treatise, Hume is confident of presenting "a compleat system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new."[2] At first, this idea of a complete system does not seem to depart from the traditional conception of philosophy as the whole system of knowledge built on absolutely secure grounds. In this respect, Hume apparently follows in Descartes' footsteps.

He also claims that philosophy consists in the critical examination of our powers and faculty. Philosophy assesses "the extent and force of human

understanding" and explains "the nature of the ideas we employ, and of the operations we perform in our reasonings." (T xv) This critical inquiry into our faculties is to lay the foundation for the complete system of the sciences. It must establish once and for all the validity of our claims to knowledge and their limitations by the study of the source of any knowledge:

> 'Tis impossible to tell what changes and improvements we might make in these sciences were we thoroughly acquainted with the extent and force of human understanding, and cou'd explain the nature of the ideas we employ, and of the operations we perform in our reasonings." (T xv)

This is still pure Locke. In fact, the real story turns out to be rather different when one looks into its details.

1) Hume's decisive move lies in the determination of a new field for this critical inquiry which is to deal with human nature in general: "the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences, so the only solid foundation we can give to this science itself must be laid on experience and observation." (T xvi) In fact, the very notion of foundation is shaken and has to be abandoned. In contrast to the critical examination of the understanding or the ascertaining of the nature of things, philosophy becomes a positive science of human behaviour and its productions. This science will be based upon observation. This is true of all its branches. Logic explains "the principles and operations of our reasoning faculty, and the nature of our ideas: morals and criticism regard our tastes and sentiments: and politics consider men as united in society." (T xv) As Hume puts it:

> There is no question of importance, whose decision is not compriz'd in the science of man; and there is none, which can be decided with any certainty, before we become acquainted with that science. In pretending therefore to explain the principles of human nature, we in effect propose a compleat system of the sciences built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security. (T xvi)

2) Hume is not very accurate about the sort of link which relates the various sciences to the science of human nature which is their foundation. He talks of relation, dependency, connection. In fact what he means is clearer than it first seems: all these terms refer to an origin and an empirical derivation, not to any logical necessity. If, when dealing with mathematics, natural philosophy and natural religion Hume still uses the language of faculties and speaks of the human understanding, in matters of logic, morals, criticism and politics, his account is now characteristically psychological. Human knowledge is not absolute knowledge but the product of activities which involve not only ideas but passions and tastes as well.

3) As significantly, the decision to set the foundation of sciences in the new science of human nature deflates the radicality of foundational issues. The science of human nature depends on the scientific model of Newton's natural philosophy. For various reasons which I only hint at -- his lack of technical competence in science, his interest in the study of man rather than in the study of natural phenomena -- Hume was not the all-Newtonian philosopher he sometimes boasted of being, but his Newtonian claims were not mere slogans either. He had grasped the main requirements of Newton's method: he keeps on

affirming the necessity of rejecting hypotheses; he has a thorough grasp of the analytic-synthetic method; he displays a clear understanding that analytical procedures destined to identify the relevant qualities of things must take precedence over the search for principles which cannot reach beyond experience. His clear understanding of Newton's method accounts for the strict limitation to phenomena he imposes on his inquiry. The impact of this new model is decisive. If the idea of a science of human nature is to have any content at all, it is by drawing on experience, observation, and phenomena, on the variety of circumstances and situations -- two words which don't seem technical but are essential in Hume.

Since we can never go beyond experience and observation, there must be strict limitations to any possible foundation. Hume is quite clear on this issue in the last pages of the introduction of the Treatise; he states an interesting series of consequences:

- the essence of the mind is as unknown to us as that of external bodies;
- we only know particular effects resulting from different circumstances and situations;
- though we must try to render our principles as universal as possible, it is impossible to go beyond experience and "to discover the ultimate original qualities of human nature" (T xvii);
- we must content ourselves with the experience of our general principles, without attempting to account for them.

All these claims concern philosophy in so far as it is now the science of human nature. They can be summarized in four theses:

a) philosophy is the foundation of sciences;

b) it is a scientific foundation;
c) this scientific foundation is part of the science of nature and obeys the same methodology;
d) what singles it out is that it is the science of human nature, but it has the same prospects and the same limitations as other sciences.

It seems to me that one frequently overlooks the decisive shift of meaning and conception, not to say the revolution, which is involved in these theses and especially the process of naturalization that epistemology undergoes.

Now I come to the consequences of this novel situation. I think they impinge on both the interpretation of Hume's philosophy and Hume's own views of his project.

III

Regarding the consequences for the interpretation of Hume's philosophy, I think that, first of all, one should take a firm stand against any simplistic neo-positivist and neo-empiricist account. Hume never entertained the project of a foundationalist reconstruction of our knowledge. In this sense, the principle of priority of impressions to ideas must not be read as a genetic and constructive principle: it is a test for dubious meanings. Accordingly, Hume almost never uses it in a genetic Lockean-type way. Except in his analysis of our ideas of space and time, which is certainly not his major achievement, Hume uses his principle of priority mostly as an anti-metaphysical weapon. Commentators like Pears, Flew and Bennett have pictured Hume as a courageous but slightly muddled precursor of logical analysis. In fact, far from attempting to reconstruct or derive our complex ideas

from sensory experience alone, Hume demonstrates that, in most cases, we do not succeed in deriving these complex ideas from experience alone, and must take into account the action and contribution of various principles of the imagination.

The true precursor of modern reconstructive empiricism was not Hume but Locke with his pervasive geneticism -- but unfortunately Locke believed in necessary causal connexions and perhaps in the real essence of things. On the contrary, Hume relentlessly demonstrates that mere empiricism fails: it has to be supplemented by the numerous tendencies, dispositions and propensities of human nature drawing on itself to organize sensory experience. If one is to talk of foundation, this cannot be in terms of inferential derivation from meanings to meanings or truths to truths: the only foundation is sceptical (Hume speaks of a sceptical system) in that it acknowledges that there is more to our constructions than in their sensory bases.

Another consequence follows, which bears on the correct assessment of Hume's empiricism. It would be foolish to jump from an excess to another and argue, as R.P. Wolff did, that since neo-empiricist interpretations miss the target, Hume was not an empiricist at all but entertained a theory of mental activity close to, say, Kant's. I would rather insist that in Hume the empiricist project carries out its effects in a negative way, when it becomes clear that it is impossible to account for our complex constructions in terms of elementary basic experiences alone. For me this is the reason why Hume so frequently underlines the role played in our conception of reality by the fictions of the imagination and the beliefs which organize and complete the sensory data. If it is true that in the

science of man as in other sciences we cannot "go beyond experience, or establish any principles which are not founded on that authority" (T xviii), any principle which transcends what is strictly given must be recognized as such and we can only state our experience of its reality.

Thus Hume's empiricism is less a positive approach in terms of epistemological reconstruction than a negative strategy for distinguishing between fictions and sensory data. Yet fictions are as natural as sensory data are. From this standpoint Hume is both close to and far from Kant. He admits that a few principles make experience possible though they do not derive from sensory experience; however he does not set out to provide for a transcendental deduction to the effect that some determinate conceptual scheme is required to make experience possible at all. He rather carries empiricism to its limits: it is still a fact that we view experience in such and such a way; moreover, there are alternative and rival ways of experiencing the world. Such is the main result of Hume's analysis of what he terms the different systems of reality in the sections of the Treatise devoted to probabilities and beliefs.

Hume points out that we may view experience on the basis of reasonable inferences, that is of inferences which consider and weigh the contradictions of facts. We also may view it according to the principles of unreflected habit and education. We may even trust the weakest and most irregular principles of the imagination. (T 122-123) No way of apprehending reality is precluded. In fact, we may apprehend experience in terms of established principles or fanciful connections as well. The choice is not a matter of transcendental logic but

hinges on dispositions, temper and circumstances. It will be eventually sanctioned by pragmatic success or failure.

From this standpoint, Hume's empiricism must be viewed in the light of its debate with transcendental philosophy and not in the light of neo-empiricist reconstructive undertakings. Hume thinks that we make use of conceptual schemes which cannot be transcendentally justified. It is a mere fact that we organize experience with the belief that the future will resemble the past or that nature will conform to our anticipations. Hume does not go so far as to suggest, like Quine, that our conceptual schemes might evolve and change through history. He rather seems to entertain the stranger idea that alternative schemes might be adopted and actually are adopted in succession by men. So to speak, different and conflicting rules and principles confront and compete in human minds. Hume's notion of general rules expresses this conflict. As one knows, general rules are set in opposition to one another. (T 149-150) They balance and correct one another but they also can possibly act in such a way as to ruin their fragile poise and turn the mind into a chaos. It seems to me that it was one of Hume's major achievements to recognize this possibility and conflicting rules acting in succession. The same man who reasons soundly and follows the most reliable rules in one domain will run into the wildest fancies in another one.

One might object that in so saying I interpret rather freely Hume's texts. I reply that the conclusion of the first book of the Treatise provides us with a striking instance of such conflicting mental dispositions. The sceptical disarray which characterizes this conclusion depends

on the comings and goings of manners of thinking which are incompatible and alternate, there being no reason to the effect that one of them should prevail over the others. Philosophical reflection carries the mind to the utmost Pyrrhonism but its influence suddenly wanes and the mind comes back to the plain certainty of common sense and its ordinary trust in experience. But again philosophical reasonings get a grip on the mind and Pyrrhonism comes back. None of these fluctuating mental states can be commanded and steadied by virtue of some logical principle. Basically there cannot be any final steady stage whatever: the mind keeps oscillating and wavering.

In fact the concluding scepticism of the first book of the Treatise is not argued: it rather is the resulting effect of conflicting arguments. One should term it a meta-scepticism which naturally -- that is, causally -- stems from the awareness of alternative and conflicting schemes of thought. As a matter of fact, this meta-scepticism is both less and more devastating than argued Pyrrhonism -- less devastating because common sense and regulated thinking is part of this sceptical experience. Yet it also is more devastating for it cannot be opted for as an intellectual experience. We have no power over it. It is the result of comings and goings we have no hold over.

IV

The discovery of the self-reference of philosophical activity is a major consequence of this new conceptual situation. For philosophy now is both a central and peripheral discipline: it still is termed foundational knowledge but under the form of a merely descriptive and empirical science. That's why

the first book of the Treatise of Human Nature performs simultaneously various different tasks. It embodies the philosophia prima of Hume's system of the sciences, the critical analysis of our faculties and a new discipline not different from what we call psychology. Besides, philosophy is to be considered a product of the same human nature it claims to be the science of. Here lies one of the most important achievements of Hume: the study of human nature implies that we raise the question of the source from which the science of human nature itself stems. If the whole of human activity is to be investigated by the new science, philosophical activity, be it mere metaphysical fiction or useful clarification, has to be analyzed too. Whenever I claim to state the principles according to which men think, feel or act, my own assertion is a case of this activity I try to describe and assess. This self-reference has important consequences:

1) In a sense, Hume's writings themselves bear the mark of it when they attempt to explain their own mechanisms of persuasion, for what reasons they will meet with belief or disbelief. For philosophical beliefs obey the same principles as ordinary beliefs do. Thus, if beliefs appear to be nothing else than questionable products of the imagination, philosophical investigation will shake and weaken them. Ironically, the philosophical belief in their questionability will be shaken and weakened in its turn. So, philosophy is caught in a process of continuous self-destruction or at least of self-doubting which induces its terminal sceptical confusion. Most of the developments and analyses of the fourth part of the Treatise Book I testify to this process: philosophical thinking is by no means firmer than the ordinary operations of our faculties.

In this respect, naturalized philosophy shuttles between scepticism and scepticism over scepticism. If the worst comes to the worst, the philosopher discovers relativism or what Quine terms epistemological nihilism. Once philosophy has lost its privileged position, it seems that no unchallengeable positions exists any more.

2) In contrast to this pessimistic assessment, another strategy consists in coming to terms with this awkward situation without worrying too much over self-reference. This is the way of naturalized epistemology.

After the outburst of scepticism of the preceding pages, the last page of the Treatise Book I expresses this decision to go on in the building up of the science of human nature in the subjects where alone one can "expect assurance and conviction":

> Human Nature is the only science of man; and yet has been hitherto the most neglected. 'Twill be sufficient for me, if I can bring it a little more into fashion, and the hope of this serves to compose my temper from that spleen, and invigorate it from that indolence, which sometimes prevail upon me. (T 273)

Hume's stand will be even clearer in the Enquiry. One usually stresses the anti-metaphysical bearing of Hume's final pronouncements, as if they anticipated those of the Vienna Circle, but it has been insufficiently emphasized that, more simply and positively, the concluding sentences of the Enquiry leave no room for any knowledge which is not knowledge in the plain scientific sense of the word. This clears the path for the sciences of psychology, history, sociology, economics and politics.

For all that, one cannot completely elude the question of self-reference, but it can be settled. If the philosopher cannot simultaneously see what he attends to and see himself attending to it, if he cannot account for his activity when carrying it on, others can do that for him by taking him as their subject of enquiry. In this sense, it is possible to assess the value of the claims to objectivity, at the cost of an infinite regress which is not uncommon in other domains. Nothing prevents us from ascertaining the objectivity of philosophical analyses the way we do in other sorts of knowledge, as for instance we do when we assess the objectivity of an historian from the reliability of his sources and the way he relied on them. The dramatic fear of circularity goes with the myth of foundational epistemology. Once we have dropped the myth, circularity boils down to an ordinary objectivity assessment.

One even may go one step further. Philosophy analyzes the various kinds of knowledge and behavior but it has to be accounted for as well. In Hume's eyes, this is nothing outrageous: he did not think philosophers should be on the safe side and escape from scrutiny and examination. Therefore, we have to take seriously the circumstances, occasions and interests of philosophical reflection. Hume does not conclude to some dramatic arbitrariness or frailty of philosophical activity: philosophy depends on the determinations of human nature. Those very philosophers whose task consists in analyzing and categorizing things, knowledges and activities are to be analyzed and categorized in their turn.

Philosophy's true origin lies in human nature: in this respect, it is both a cultural fact and a psychological disposition. In some of his essays ("Of Refinement in the Arts," "Of the Rise and

Progress of the Arts and Sciences") in his Natural History of Religion, Hume delineates the outlines of a sociology of knowledge. There are definite political and economic conditions to the rise and development of philosophy. Even the quotation from Tacitus which heads the Treatise makes sense: philosophy develops when men can think what they want and say what they think, when they don't live any more from hand to mouth and enjoy political freedom.

Philosophy also originates in psychological dispositions. These are calm, delicate, serious and a bit splenetic dispositions to reflection and abstruse thinking and the pleasure they bring about is akin to that of hunting and playing. No wonder, Hume studies these dispositions in the Treatise Book II, when he deals with passions (T II-III-X, "Of Curiosity, or the Love of Truth"). Likewise, the essay "On the Delicacy of Taste and Passion" presents us with a psychological theory of what might be termed the philosophical temper or constitution.

V

I conclude and sum up my points.

For Hume, philosophy proceeds from human nature which is at the same time its natural and causal origin and its subject. It is a strange discipline, empirical and self-referent, dealing with the various areas of human behavior, in permanent danger of splitting up into special empirical researches, yet claiming to be the science of sciences.

Hume was conscious of the novelty of his claims and of their possible discrepancies. This results in intermittent sceptical crises against the background of a firm commitment to an empirical and

psychological approach akin to Quine's idea of naturalized epistemology. At any rate, philosophy is deeply transformed. It is not the Hobbesian or Cartesian fabric of knowledge any more, nor the Lockean critical examination of our faculties. Before the terms were coined, it is a mixture of human and social sciences. Its positive method restricts the inquiry to the field of phenomena.

In this respect, Hume bids the foundational philosophy good-bye and anticipates the modesty of contemporary philosophical enterprises. This does not mean rejecting philosophy but toning down philosophers' dramatic pretensions, hence perhaps this quotation from the conclusion of the Treatise,

> The conduct of a man, who studies philosophy in this careless manner, is more truly sceptical than that of one, who feeling in himself an inclination to it, is yet so overwhelm'd with doubts and scruples, as totally to reject it. (T 273)

Yves Michaud
University of Paris 1
Sorbonne
17 rue de la Sorbonne
75005 Paris

1. Willard V. Quine, Ontological Relativity and Other Essays (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp. 69-90. Further references will be placed in parentheses and inserted in the text.

2. David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. xvi. Further references will be cited as 'T' followed by the relevant page number(s).