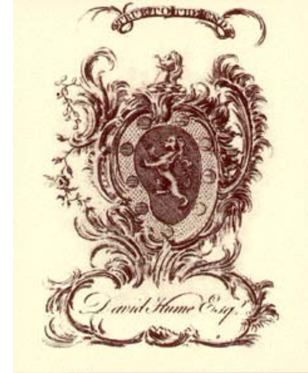

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Despair and Hope in Hume's Introduction to the *Treatise of Human Nature*

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This paper deals with the Introduction to the *Treatise of Human Nature* because I think it identifies how Hume conceives the chief problem he confronts in that work, and I focus on the ninth paragraph in the Introduction because I believe it reveals Hume's characteristic way of addressing that problem.[1]

Skepticism and Antiskepticism in the Scholarship on Hume

Among the disputes which dominate in the scholarship on David Hume the most persistent and perhaps most vexing is whether he is to be viewed ultimately as a skeptic or as a thinker with a constructive philosophical program. For roughly the first one hundred and twenty-five years after his death Hume was characterized as a skeptic, or rather was denigrated as a skeptic, for skepticism was then deemed a peril, if not a perversion. Norman Kemp Smith challenged the skeptical reading and opened the way for alternative interpretations, an amazing variety of which we can now say have succeeded one another without any having established itself. Thus while it is no longer plausible to say either that Hume was nothing but a skeptic or that he did not seriously advance skepticism, the matter of how to compose Hume's skepticism with his nonskeptical program continues to challenge his readers and commentators.

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There is little danger that this paper will alter the unsettled state of Hume scholarship. And this for two reasons. First, I have no wish to pigeon-hole Hume under one or another of the conventional identifying tags—the "isms"—which serve historians of philosophy more or less well in dealing with other classical figures. Further, I believe there is both skepticism and constructivism in the *Treatise*, and so, rather than trying to eliminate the one or the other, I propose to explore how and why Hume advances constructive and skeptical programs together and as parts of the same effort.

If one looks for them, there are several points in his philosophical writings where Hume brings the tension between skepticism and constructivism to the surface—notably in the Conclusion of Book I with transition to Book II of the *Treatise*, in the first *Enquiry*, and in the *Dialogues*. Strangely, however, scholars have scarcely noticed that Hume did just this in the opening pages of his earliest published work. On several counts this is a regrettable oversight.

First, the Introduction to the *Treatise of Human Nature* is written in relatively straightforward nontechnical language and stands independent of the particular philosophical problematics in which, as the book unfolds, Hume's reader naturally gets caught up. Thus it not only gives a very clear indication of the author's designs but may even, hopefully, afford an outline for an overall interpretation of his philosophical work.

Further, this text is especially promising because in the Introduction Hume lays out the plan of the book and coaxes the reader into the frame of thinking which would hopefully make for the genial acceptance of the *Treatise*. If we seek clues as to how Hume wants us to think about the basic tension in his work, then the Introduction to the *Treatise* is the first place to look. Further, in the case of an author self-consciously as radical and as ambitious as Hume, the Introduction is an especially fertile source of information about what he takes to be obstacles standing in the way of the proper appreciation and understanding of his work.

The Structure of the Introduction to the *Treatise*

If the structure of the typical happy-ending story is an alternation of good times, bad times, and finally the victory of good times renewed, Hume's Introduction represents an inversion. It starts with bad news about the state of learning, advances toward hope of a New Era, but instead of moving to the consolidation of good news, it then records despair, offers a resigned accommodation, and ends with an uneasy balance between ambition to remake the world of learning and a sense of having to settle, in the face of serious difficulties, for whatever one can get.

Let the following serve as a paraphrase of the ten paragraphs covering seven printed pages in the Oxford edition (xiii–xix).

Par. 1. Reports on the sorry state of the learned disciplines, as perceived by educated persons; endorses this perception.

Par. 2. Remarks on the poor opinion of the world of learning, as perceived by the unschooled; endorses this perception.

Par. 3. Notes the resulting common prejudice against philosophical theorizing; distances the author from it.

Par. 4. Introduces the idea of a discipline on which all the sciences depend. a Science of Man whose object is the scope of human understanding and the nature of the ideas employed in all reasonings.

Par. 5. Specifies the dependence of practical as well as speculative endeavors on the Science of Man.

Par. 6. Proposes "a compleat systems of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new"; claims this offers "hope for success in our philosophical researches." (T xvi)

Par. 7. Distinguishes the proposed discipline from the efforts of the past by its strict adherence to an experimental method, not unlike that which has met with such success in the natural sciences.

Par. 8. Enters a skeptical observation: the essence of things being unknowable to us, the hope for success of the experimental method can only be a limited one.

Par. 9. Admits to despair of attaining "what is naturally satisfactory to the mind of man"; delineates how nonetheless "mutual contentment and satisfaction" can be shared between author and reader. (T xviii)

Par. 10. Notes that the shortcoming of the proposed system is endemic to the human condition; proposes to draw experiments from the common course of the world and human affairs.

As I see it, this Introduction evinces a quite real tension between the hope for a new system of the sciences and the despair of achieving knowledge satisfactory to the mind. Hume indubitably advances a program to reconstruct the sciences. On page xvi of the Introduction he tells us:

> 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.

Although this language scarcely smacks of skepticism, only a page and a half later (in paragraph eight) the tone changes to one of despair as Hume

confesses that our condition is at bottom ignorance and that "the very science of human nature, which he pretends to explain" fails to yield knowledge "satisfactory to the mind of man." (T xvii f.) He goes on (in paragraph nine) to suggest that our ignorance, which is such that we can give no theoretically adequate reason for our principles, puts Hume and his reader on all fours with the unlearned, the mere vulgar. The root of the problem is, as Hume sees it, an unavoidable skepticism.[2]

Hume's Avowal of Skepticism in the Introduction: False Starts

Let me move to state squarely the problem we encounter in the Introduction: why in the midst of announcing what amounts to a revolution in the sciences does Hume interject what must strike the reader as the sour note of skepticism? Why does he shift from the uplifting hope of paragraph six to the despair of paragraphs eight and nine? There are at least three ways of answering this question which I find unsatisfactory.

First, one might argue that, consistent with the spirit of modern science, Hume is advancing a commendable methodological skepticism, i.e., a conservative ethics of belief which counsels caution, doubt, circumspection, withholding of assent until thoroughly adequate evidence is uncovered. This suggestion seems plausible inasmuch as Hume at several points in his writings does in fact remind his reader of the requirements of a conservative ethics of belief. But surely his aim in the Introduction cannot be anything so commonplace as cautioning the reader to exercise circumspection and good judgment. Since a methodological skepticism is a feature of practically any form of serious inquiry, even the most ambitious, it can scarcely be said to represent so powerful a counterforce to the hope mentioned in paragraph six as is the despair announced in paragraph nine. The source of this despair is plainly something of a character quite different from a commendable ethics of belief.

Second, in a form of skepticism that I term "tactical" the destructive criticisms which an author launches against previous ways of conducting organized inquiry perform a function preparatory to that author's constructive program, a ground-clearing role designed to remove outmoded forms of thinking. As we should expect of any revolutionary thinker Hume's works abound with examples of tactical skepticism. Interestingly not only is there no inconsistency when skepticism is directed against forms or models of knowing other than the knowledge involved in an author's constructive program (consider that even so constructive a thinker as Kant deploys tactical skepticism), but elements of a narrow tactical skepticism and of constructivism smoothly combine to form a single program. This second approach does not answer our question about hope and despair in the Introduction to the *Treatise*, however, for while Hume often avails himself of

tactical skepticism, what he avows in paragraphs eight and nine is not directed narrowly at previous ways of thinking but constitutes a broad skepticism relating to the powers of the mind generally (extending forward to the project of reconstructing the sciences and reaching to the very principles through which we engage in theory and speculation). In sum, the skepticism that Introduction represents is too pervasive to be explained away as being intended as merely tactical.

Lastly, one might suggest that by introducing the skeptical note Hume engaged in the ploy of rhetorical *legerdemain,* showing us a glimpse of despair only to whisk it away later in a display of his authorial dexterity. This can scarcely be the case, for he gives the reader no hint that skepticism later disappears. Quite the contrary, skepticism is presented as something that for Hume and Hume's reader is here to stay.

I conclude that the explanation of why Hume introduces the skeptical theme is that he is persuaded it embodies an inescapable truth about the human condition. Until the contrary is demonstrated, this conviction will guide the discussion which follows.

Paragraphs Eight and Nine of the Introduction

Let us review the context in which Hume couches the skeptical and constructive programs of the *Treatise.* First, the observations Hume offers on the learned disciplines in the first three paragraphs are no mere rhetorical device but offer an estimate of the state of learning which is just as one would expect with men having ignored the lessons of skepticism. Organized inquiry could not have been altogether futile in the past, however, without rendering entirely vain the hope for a complete new system of the sciences of which Hume writes in paragraph six. In fact, paragraph seven makes it clear that the application of an experimental method in the natural sciences points the way which must be followed if this hope is to be realized.

Paragraph eight of the Introduction testifies that Hume was fully aware of the tension between constructive inquiry and skepticism. He underwrites a way of knowing which proceeds "from careful and exact experiments, and the observation of those particular effects, which result from its [the mind's] different circumstances and situations" (T xvii). But at the same time he declares for a skepticism regarding "ultimate original qualities" of things—either of the mind or of external bodies. In the next paragraph Hume indicates how he resolves this tension. In its entirety the paragraph reads as follows.

> I do not think a philosopher, who would apply himself so earnestly to the explaining the ultimate principles of the soul, would show himself a great master in that very science of human nature, which he pretends to explain, or very knowing in what is naturally

> satisfactory to the mind of man. For nothing is more certain, than that despair has almost the same effect upon us with enjoyment, and that we are no sooner acquainted with the impossibility of satisfying any desire, than the desire itself vanishes. When we see, that we have arrived at the utmost extent of human reason, we sit down contented; tho' we be perfectly satisfied in the main of our ignorance, and perceive that we can give no reason for our most general and most refined principles, beside our experience of their reality; which is the reason of the mere vulgar, and what it required no study at first to have discovered for the most particular and most extraordinary phaenomenon. And as this impossibility of making any farther progress is enough to satisfy the reader, so the writer may derive a more delicate satisfaction from the free confession of his ignorance, and from his prudence in avoiding that error, into which so many have fallen, of imposing their conjectures and hypotheses on the world for the most certain principles. When this mutual contentment and satisfaction can be obtained betwixt the master and scholar, I know not what more we can require of our philosophy. (T xviii f.)

In the first sentence Hume recognizes that we can imagine a discipline of a sort radically different from the system he proposes—a knowing of ultimate things; he acknowledges that the human mind has a natural desire for this kind of knowing; and he describes the repeated frustration of this desire as a form of despair. Yet in what follows he diagnoses this despair as being other than terminal. And this is surprising since, if Hume thinks this skeptical despair is curable, it is not at all clear what powers of the mind could possibly serve as the source of the remedy, for first, constructive philosophers will not readily admit that any passion of the human makeup has a legitimate role to play in determining matters of truth, and second, skeptics have held that reason or the intellectual powers of the mind are too weak to furnish such a remedy.

Hume's solution is ingenious: he asserts that skepticism is not only the occasion for the despair but its cure as well. His view is that despair, once experienced, produces in us almost the same effect as satiation, namely, the abatement of desire. Skeptical conviction is said to provide a cure for the despair because "we are no sooner acquainted with the impossibility of satisfying any desire, than the desire itself vanishes" (xxii). Of course Hume assumes that his readers should be brought to the full awareness of their ignorance, or what is the same, of the limits of knowledge (something that it takes most of Book I of the *Treatise* for Hume to deliver); then we abandon, if Hume is right, our natural desire for unattainable knowledge and we arrive at a kind of contentment with whatever kinds of knowledge we can reach (see T 416 f.). By a dialectical turn despair here operates on itself: the original desire for knowledge,

recognizing its inevitable unfulfillment, turns to despair, and this despair, grasping its source in human ignorance, transcends itself by altering the original unlimited desire and taking a form which reflects our limited condition, resulting in contentment. Though Hume does not use this term in the Introduction, I do not hesitate to say that what he is talking about in paragraph nine is a dynamic of epistemic moderation. While doubtless this moderation involves a sense of loss—the old ideal is lost, and its loss is presumable genuinely felt—one also experiences satisfaction (Hume calls this "a more delicate satisfaction") at correctly ordering one's cognitive powers; and once achieved, epistemic moderation reshapes the hope earlier referred to, offering a new start and promising a reformation or revolution in the sciences. I submit it is this process of moderation in the order of knowledge that represents the climax of the Introduction to the *Treatise.*

If there is any tendency to read the overcoming of despair as banishing skepticism and effectively re-inaugurating epistemic enthusiasm, this is quashed as Hume likens to the condition of the unenlightened masses, or what he calls "the reason of the mere vulgar," the chastened or curtailed condition which results when the desire for knowledge is moderated through skeptical despair. Epistemic moderation squares materially with the description he gives of the condition of the unlearned: the vulgar do not pursue questions about ultimate realities, they are satisfied with their own ignorance and realize they can give no reason for their principles beside the experience of their reality. The irony that the correct understanding of the human condition is one "that it required no study at first to have discovered" terminates not in the intellectual's humiliation but, unexpectedly, in his or her enjoyment of a different kind of satisfaction, one Hume describes as being "more delicate" and one which, I surmise, is unavailable to the mere vulgar.[3]

If we can get clear about this "more delicate satisfaction" we shall come closer to understanding the difference between the condition of the moderated intellectual and the condition of the mere vulgar. Etiology provides one explanation: the intellectual has transformed the desire for knowledge by going through the despair Hume describes in paragraph nine, while the attitude toward the world of the mere vulgar appears to include a stance that happens to be epistemically moderate without the experience of that despair. But beyond this, the intellectual's conviction of the limits of knowledge amounts to a liberation from a desire which, if unaltered, would be bound to be frustrated; his despair makes him conscious of the falsities of dogmatism; and I might add, though Hume does not do so in the Introduction, imposes on the liberated intellectual to resist in evidenced doctrines—what Hume here calls "conjectures and hypotheses"—creations of the mind fashioned by the fancy and made into objects of belief to satisfy the desire for ultimate knowledge.[4] How extraordinary is the self-discipline of mind which Hume here takes for granted becomes evident when we contrast it with the dispositions from

which springs, for example, the Kantian postulate of the existence of God.[5]

In the last sentence of paragraph nine Hume returns to the theme to be found in the first, namely, his status as author. It has by now been made clear that (by the traditional standards) he is not, and cannot be, "a great master in that very science of human nature, which he pretends to explain," but this very confession evinces the more delicate satisfaction Hume a little later in the paragraph extols (by the standards of the reformed sciences). What he now adds is that, although the community between author and reader (his terms are "master and scholar") which would result from the communication of ultimate knowledge is in no way possible, what is achievable is "mutual contentment and satisfaction" between author and reader which consists in the sharing of the fruits of transcending dogmatism detailed above. Much more could be said on the heading of delicacy of sentiment and on how Hume thinks about his own authorship and how he conceives his reader, but these topics must await another day.

Constructivism in the Midst of Skepticism

We should note that in this pivotal paragraph Hume has not abandoned nor even mitigated the skepticism advanced in paragraph eight. As inquiry progresses and the complete system of the sciences develops, it is not that hope gains vigor because skepticism has been answered but rather that Hume and his reader have found a way to work with and within skepticism.[6] This resolution can be only frustrating to the philosophical rationalist who seeks a refutation of skepticism as a precondition for embarking on the sciences or to the rationalist who expects Philosophy to issue an epistemic license certifying the faculties of the mind for attaining knowledge. Hume does no such thing (see T 186 f.) and yet he proposes what he terms a reformation of the epistemic enterprise and a complete new system. Obviously the key to Hume's accommodation to the tension between skepticism and constructivism lies in how epistemic moderation informs the manner of inquiry regarding the human condition which he proposes. I shall try to spell this out in two phases.

To have arrived at epistemic moderation, i.e., to have entered into and transcended skeptical despair, is presumed to give the inquirer a reorientation toward the pursuit of knowledge without which, in Hume's view, there is no prospect of progress in the sciences. Without this the questions the inquirer would ask are the wrong questions, and the energy spent in trying to answer them is at best wasted, if the inquirer has the honesty to recognize this, or worse, if he or she does not, yields only delusions embraced to provide some manner of answer and give rest to the untempered desire for knowledge. Again, the Kantian example leaps to mind. Further, without the reorientation which comes from skepticism, the inquirer schooled in modern systems seeks a form of explanation—consider Hobbes' and Locke's ideal of demonstrative

knowledge—which is in fact largely unobtainable. The reorientation Hume has in mind reaches so far as to redefine what is meant by knowledge itself. Thus, knowledge which figures in Hume's proposed new system of the sciences as the object of the progressive application of the experimental method means something different from the knowledge declared impossible in paragraph eight. (And as a result, there is of course no logical inconsistency between the skepticism and the constructivism heralded in the Introduction. And ignorance such as figures in the language of the repudiated systems of the past means something different from ignorance which in paragraph nine is said to be a source of satisfaction to Hume and his reader.

In a more positive vein, epistemic moderation informs how the reader of the Introduction to the *Treatise* is to think of himself or herself. In Hume's view we should not think we must hold out for rational certification of the faculties but rather must understand ourselves in terms of our historical situation: for his contemporary reader the old way of doing metaphysics has been rendered disreputable; the experimental sciences are lauded for having met with some successes; the powers of the mind are acknowledged as being sadly limited; as skeptics we are aware of our ignorance. We proceed, but without assurances; as we advance, we must question ourselves, constantly check what we are doing, resist the temptation to think we are secure in possession of the truth. Skepticism forces us to scale back our expectations: epistemic moderation, for those who have achieved it, makes us satisfied with the forms of explanation which are within our power, though we are aware this may fall short of what, in our now transcended epistemic immoderation, we would have required. Even our hopes are moderated hopes.

Clearly the skepticism of paragraph eight is a confined skepticism—it undercuts much of traditional metaphysics but it does not obviate proceeding on the experimental method. But it would be a mistake to think that the image of confinement signifies that so long as inquiry respects the "off limits" posted by skepticism it may proceed full tilt in search of the sort of knowledge which within its proper province, on this view, it pursues. For Hume epistemic moderation induces a diffidence even about what the experimental method can achieve, it does not really open up a new territory of dogmatic certainty or rational indubitability (though Hume confesses that in moments of laxity the skeptic may find himself using phrases like, "'tis certain..." or "there can be no doubt that...") (T 273 f.) With the elimination of ultimate questions, the search for certainty does not shift to the foreground and treat the experimental world as representing a new ultimacy that is satisfying to the mind of man.

Moreover, it would be a mistake to think there is a clear line of demarcation between what is "off limits" and what is licit access; the activity of trying in practice to discern where the line lies between an experimentally accessible domain and questions of ultimacy is something which itself must

be informed by the skeptic's epistemic moderation. In short, skeptical despair must be real, lest even after working with the experimental method we backslide into metaphysical theorizing (for example, on the source, or roots, or meaning of the world revealed through that method), as the example of theologizing Newtonians so ironically testifies.

In sum, the ethos of epistemic moderation yields a New Inquirer in Philosophy. This inquirer proceeds tentatively, with diffidence about the powers of the mind, and pursues, with an experimental method itself moderated, an epistemic ideal which, in comparison with that built into the old systems, stands forth as radically redefined. In view of the basic importance of epistemic moderation to Hume's constructive project, we can now answer the question why he interjects the strong theme of skepticism into the Introduction to the *Treatise*: he does so because he had to—there is no other way that his reader can be prepared for what follows. Both skepticism and methodically formed beliefs are inomissible components of the singular quality of mind Hume inculcates as the goal of reflective inquiry.

Corollaries

1) The question of skepticism is something which for Hume does not exist apart from human interests and specifically the human aspiration to know. For this reason he had to cast epistemological problems in a new light, translating them into terms with which philosophers are not accustomed; he subjectivizes or personalizes the question by making knowledge the object of desire and comprehending the treatment of skepticism within discourse about the passions—specifically, desire, hope and despair. But he avoids reducing the epistemic to the nonepistemic because the "desire, hope and despair" of which he writes represent not the passions of everyday life but moments in the life of intellectual inquiry. This type of recasting is characteristic because for Hume it is not enough that a philosophical account should be true—it must make a difference to us. Commentators who find this odd do not appear to have taken to heart what Hume has to say in Books II and III of the *Treatise* about reason and the passions. (And thus, from still another source, we arrive at a fresh confirmation of the thesis championed by Páll Árdal, that Hume's thinking in Book I of the *Treatise* depends very much on what he says in the later Books.)

2) By treating the pursuit of knowledge as driven by a desire, Hume opens up the question of the proper degree to which we should give our lives over to the ideal of the philosophical pursuit of knowledge. He says not just that the desire for knowledge can outreach the possibility of attainment (for philosophers had recognized this for some time), but that

the desire itself can be overindulged. On this model the philosophers who demand certitude, posit an absolute ground, set out to account for the infinite or for the ultimate are guilty of excess—they are intemperate. But when we are told that the remedy is to discipline the philosophic drive itself, the desire for ultimate explanations which must be given up is something that Hume freely admits is natural.[7] In epistemology as in morals, the natural is not equatable with the good; and the good must be achieved through measures which temper, correct and control what by contrast we tend to call the natural.

3) To do epistemology in an innovative manner following Hume would allow us to adapt language traditionally at home in moral discourse and to talk about epistemic virtues. Further, in accounting for epistemic moderation we can deploy the kind of explanation Hume gives of moderation of the passions, i.e., specifically, of the self-moderation of a passion through redirection or reorientation—which he worked out most fully in his treatment of the origin of justice in Book III of the *Treatise.*

The tension between constructivism and skepticism Hume essayed of course leaves a number of questions unanswered. In itself, this is not a fault in an Introduction; in fact, it may be a virtue of an Introduction to spur the reader to see whether answers are forthcoming in the main text.[8]

Conclusion

In the Introduction to the *Treatise,* Hume delineates his approach to skepticism and the conduct of scientific inquiry. Unlike its classical counterpart, Humean skepticism does not extinguish the search for knowledge but modifies it by acknowledging limits to knowledge, moderating the epistemic passions which animate inquiry, and re-shaping the meaning of the concepts whereby we think about and carry out the pursuit of knowledge. The element of hope is anchored in the experimental method and the distinctively Humean conviction that men can achieve self-discipline in their epistemic aims; the element of despair is occasioned by recognition of the vast areas where human ignorance seems terminal; the tentative resolution between hope and despair fastens on to the project of conducting inquiry with and within skepticism, in bootstrap fashion, without any guarantees, and especially without a license being granted by reason to certify the faculties or authorize the undertaking. Hume's objective in the Introduction is to alert the reader to the complex and delicate challenge that lies ahead, particularly as it relates to the reader's own self-understanding as inquirer.

REFERENCES

This paper was delivered at the Hume Society Session at the Eastern Division American Philosophical Association meeting, December 1993, and bears the marks of having been prepared for oral presentation. Some points are amplified and arguments strengthened in the notes attached to this version.

1 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd. ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), hereafter references cited within the text.

2 By *skepticism* is here meant grave diffidence about the power to the mind to attain either knowledge altogether or some form of knowledge otherwise sought or at least deemed worth seeking.

3 In the selection that introduces the *Essays* (1742) Hume quite tellingly writes that when a man possesses a delicacy of sentiment, "he is [made] more happy by what pleases his taste, than by what gratifies his appetites" (David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, edited by E. Miller [Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1985], 5).

4 Such fancy has some analogy to how the sexual drive, if unsatisfied, can create in the imagination unreal objects to give it surrogate satisfactions.

5 On how Kant represents self-indulgence of an immoderate desire for Knowledge, see my "Hume and Ethical Monism," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 5 (1988), 157–171.

6 The chastened condition of the Humean inquirer differs from methodological skepticism in that it scales down the objectives of inquiry, whereas methodological skepticism merely exercises due caution in the pursuit of whatever objectives the inquirer pursues. Methodological skepticism is like epistemic prudence in the selection of means to ends independently set; skeptical inquiry is like epistemic temperance in relation to ends. The precedent of classical skepticism (see note 7) suggests a stronger simile: that the chastened condition is like that resulting from a conversion. Unfortunately this term is so strongly associated with religion that, even if one should emphasize that a skeptical conversion operates in a manner quite the opposite of a religious one—through a withdrawal from ideals rather than laying on of new ideals, it is still unlikely that it can be rendered serviceable for our purposes.

7 In this regard Hume's approach to skepticism, innovative though it be, is close to the classical skepticism of Sextus Empiricus, who likewise presents the skeptical question as one related, if not to desire, shall we say to conatus. In the following text Sextus nicely encapsulates the rise of skepticism in the stages of the mind's progress toward recognition of its limitations. "His initial purpose in philosophizing was to pronounce judgments on appearances. He wished to find out which are true and which false, so as to attain mental tranquillity. In doing so, he met with contradicting alternatives of equal force. Since he could not decide between them, he withheld judgment. Upon his suspension of judgment there followed, by chance, mental tranquillity in matters of opinion" (*Skepticism, God and Man*, edited by P. Hallie [Middletown: Wesleyan

University Press, 1964], 41). The mental tranquillity which the seeker after knowledge originally pursued would be the attainment of the intellectual telos; the mental tranquillity which the relinquisher achieves by chance is not the satisfaction of that same conation but rather self-satisfaction in abandoning it (reminiscent, I submit, of the "more delicate satisfaction" of which Hume writes in paragraph nine). This self-cancellation manifests bloated reason's unworthiness to be the center of human life. Sextus characterizes the enlightened condition resulting from the skeptic's disengagement from immoderate reason as one of "mental tranquillity." Although Humean skepticism is like classical Pyrrhonism in involving abandonment of the desire for metaphysical knowledge (matters of ultimate principles) and in being achieved without subordinating epistemic values to nonepistemic values, nonetheless it differs from classical Pyrrhonism in being a partial, not a global skepticism, and for just this reason it does not, if Hume is right, run afoul of the problem of whether the skeptic can live her skepticism.

8 It is noteworthy that the theme of hope and despair recurs prominently in the Appendix when Hume reviews his account of the self. Hume introduces the discussion by raising hope (T 633, first line after the bar) but later "hopes vanish" in the pivotal paragraph of the argument (T 635 f.). While the terms "despair" and "hope" do not appear in the paragraph with which discussion of the self concludes, it is clear, I believe, that the diffidence Hume evinces counts as despair and that the paragraph's last sentence reverberates the theme of hope. While this section of the *Treatise* has proved challenging for commentators to interpret, the prominence of the theme of hope and despair suggests that in the Appendix Hume may be doing little more than pointing out that, the positive assertiveness in his Book I account of how we construct the idea of personal identity notwithstanding, we no more know the ultimate principles of the intellectual world than we do those of the material world.

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