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Abstract: This essay treats the final version of Hume's *Essays*, Volume 1, as an artfully shaped whole. Framed by essays on taste that address the interaction of personal and social dynamics, the volume is organized into loose clusters of political and moral essays that share a common pattern of offering multiple approaches to the issues they examine and pursuing a given idea until it reaches a point of excess that generates a salutary correction. This activity circumscribes an inexact range of balance, which is left for the reader to resolve or, better, to continue. In this, Hume's *Essays* invite readers to participate in the interaction between self-formation and cultural forms that is motor of Hume's post-skeptical philosophy and the genre of the essay alike.

The *Essays* and the Essay

In this essay, I approach the final, posthumously published version of Hume's *Essays*, Volume 1, as an artfully shaped whole. While scholars have recognized the importance of the *Essays* to Hume's career and thought, and individual essays have been well explicated, less attention has been paid to the *Essays* as a unified work in a particular genre. Eugene Miller notes that the *Essays* occupied Hume throughout his life, and indeed Hume was adding to them right up to his death.[1] And Hume's use of the essay was extensive. Whether or not we accept M. A. Box's argument that the *Treatise* itself should be understood as an essay, it is clear that Hume thought essays a proper vehicle for a variety of projects: he turned to writing

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essays after the public failure of the *Treatise*; he recast that work as *Philosophical Essays*; and he worked in the genre for the rest of his career.[2]

It is tempting to say that if the genre of the essay did not exist, Hume would have had to invent it, so perfectly does it suit his purposes. But of course Hume turned to the essay because it was there, offering an established vehicle for the kind of literary work he sought to undertake, and perhaps providing the specific generic conventions for that kind of work in the first place. The habits of thinking trained by the essay—dynamic, experimental, conversational—at the least dovetailed with (if not more actively informed) much of Hume's writing.[3] For a century and a half before Hume turned to essays to recast his failed *Treatise* and rescue his career, essayists had been using the genre to help them weigh and test (*essayer*) their thinking and their experience. The British essay grew out of the practice of keeping commonplace books, tools to aid the digestion of one's reading. These registers of reading developed into a genre sponsoring a mediate practice of "readerly" writing that was tentative, unfinished, and open to further work, both one's own and others'.[4] Essays are organized by response, both mine to the matter at hand and yours to mine. I register my reflections and wait for yours in turn. In this way the provisional, experimental, and mediate practice of essaying is itself one loop in an open-ended, collaborative, and social practice of learning.

A wide variety of texts were called "essays" in the early eighteenth century: notebooks of personal reflection like Mary Chudleigh's *Essays* (1710) that were used for moral self-improvement; scholarly works like John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) that sought to claim the rhetorical stance and epistemological modesty of such intimate journals; and periodical essays like Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's influential *Spectator* (1711–1712) that offered a forum for public discussion of the social and cultural issues of the day.[5] Hume began to write his essays on the model of the *Spectator* but after an initial apprenticeship to what he called the "agreeable *Triffling*" of Addison, his *Essays*—published as books, not periodicals—took on a "argumentative richness" absent from the *Spectator*, and served as a continuation of his philosophical work.[6] Locke's, Chudleigh's, and Addison's essays offer three points of reference for the early eighteenth-century British essay, and Hume's own *Essays* combine these strands of philosophical modesty, self-improvement, and cultural reflection.[7] In this, he takes advantage of the genre's capacious hybridity. Eduardo Nicol calls the essay "*almost* philosophy and *almost* literature," and John McCarthy calls it "part poetry, part science."[8] Hume's move from the *Treatise* to the *Essays*, therefore, is not exactly a turn from one genre to another, but rather an adoption of a genre defined by that turn itself, one organized by the dynamism of the processes of thinking in their variety and their mutually reflective associations.[9]

In approaching the first volume of Hume's *Essays* as a unified whole, then, I do not mean to suggest there is a single overarching conception organizing the

work. As Theodor Adorno writes, the essay "erects no scaffolding, no edifice" and it "coordinates elements, rather than subordinating them."[10] But the *Essays* are organized by several internal dynamics that are integral to Hume's writing and to the genre alike. The volume is bookended by two essays on taste that address the interaction of personal and social dynamics, and it is organized into loose clusters of political and moral essays that share a common pattern of development. Formally, the *Essays* tend to circle their themes, offering multiple approaches to the issues they examine and pursuing a given idea until it reaches a point of excess that generates a salutary correction. This oscillation between extremes circumscribes an inexact range of balance, which is left for the reader to resolve or, better, to continue. In this, the *Essays* invite their readers to participate in the interaction between self-formation and cultural forms that is the motor of Hume's post-skeptical philosophy.

Delicacies: Self-Cultivation and the Community of Letters

The first volume of the *Essays* opens, "Some people are subject to a certain delicacy of passion" (3). A common observation, a generalization, at once trite and true but not exact, the line establishes the tonal range and rhetorical gambit of the *Essays*, which, as is typical of the genre more generally, verify their claims in their readers' responses. "Some people" are especially sensitive. Perhaps the essay solicits the delicacy it announces. I certainly know my own sensitivities better than anyone else does and do not experience yours in the same way; the truth of the distinction may be guaranteed by the existential fact that I live centered in my own experience and feel yours either through my own sympathetic response (mediated by my own feelings) or through an imaginative effort. Or perhaps the claim is even more casual: some people can be *so* thin-skinned. In either case, the essay starts where you are and takes the fact of difference for granted. It proceeds by suggesting that this kind of delicacy leads one to more lively enjoyments but also more pungent sorrows, but since bad fortune outweighs good, on the whole this is not a good thing (4). An analogous delicacy, though, the delicacy of taste, resembles that of passion (4), having the same effect of enlarging the sphere of happiness and misery (5). While we cannot control the accidents of life, we can choose our pleasures, so delicacy of taste is as desirable as delicacy of passion is regrettable (5). Hume blithely rejects as impossible the stoical ideal of independence from external accidents but suggests we can achieve some control over our own happiness by surrounding ourselves with things we like (5), a modified stoicism realized by a moderate epicureanism. Training taste and learning to "judge aright" will help tamp down our excessive passions, as learning to direct and regulate those sensitivities will "cure" the delicacy of passion that leaves us feeling insecurely hostage to fortune (6).

But then Hume catches himself: "But perhaps I have gone too far in saying, that a cultivated taste for the polite arts extinguishes the passions, and renders us indifferent to those objects, which are so fondly pursued by the rest of mankind. On farther reflection, I find, that it rather improves our sensibility for all the tender and agreeable passions" (6). Citing a familiar tag from Ovid, Hume repeats the cliché that humane letters improve tempers and soften emotions (6–7).[11] Poetry rather than philosophy, Ovid rather than Seneca, corrects Hume's excess as the language of "curing" passions with that of forming them. The benefits of such training are social. Delicacy of taste is favorable to love and friendship because it is confined to a few choice companions who share one's particular tastes and interests (7), and confined sentiments—by a kind of emotional waterworks—can go further; narrow currents cut deeper ruts. In this opening essay, delicate taste enables better social relations, but in later essays (which I discuss below), social relations are integral to the cultural standards by which one's taste is developed.

What delivers us from our excesses is not philosophical rigor but the sociality of art. The Ovid passage is from a letter the poet wrote while in exile after being banished for an early error, and it's tempting to read it as carefully chosen (however much it is a commonplace in the period). In its original context Ovid's lines are less a statement than a prompt. The poem seeks to realize the delicacy it promises, to evoke in Graecinus, Ovid's friend and patron, the tolerant humanity that will help redeem the poet's mistake. This may be a self-referential comment on Hume's use of essays to correct the youthful error of his *Treatise*. Hume offers his *Essays* in hopes of a reprieve from his own exile, seeking to be accepted into a community of letters that values his delicacy, and seeking perhaps to form such an audience, or at least find a circle that shares his tastes.

Hume has a propensity to go too far, and the turn in this opening essay echoes earlier ones. Like the famous conclusion to Book 1 of the *Treatise* where nature rescues the philosopher from his skepticism, depression, and isolation, "Delicacy" performs one of those penduluming corrections typical of Hume's writing.[12] Fred Parker notes that Hume's characteristic twofold movement between corrosive skepticism and everyday life shapes both the *Treatise* and his career more generally; both are organized by the need to strike a balance expressed by a "stylistic poise that offers simultaneous access to the perspective of the sceptic and the perspective of common sense."[13] The gesture of "Delicacy" performs in little what the *Essays* do as a whole, turning from the rigorous cures of philosophy to the softening, socializing benefits of belles-lettres. Parker's formulation of "poise" and "simultaneous access" captures well the balance between positions, but not the element of time that is also integral to Hume's writing. Hume's work is organized by the movements of minds in time—and by time itself when those minds run out of steam. The phrase "on farther reflection" registers these movements and also serves as a generic marker of the wandering, self-adjusting mode of the essay. The

concluding line of "Delicacy," "And the ardours of a youthful appetite become an elegant passion" (8), is something like a blueprint of the dynamic, transformative movement that shapes Hume's *Essays* at every level. Excessive appetites become elegant passions by a process of "farther reflection" that is at the heart of Hume's understanding (his philosophy), self-cultivation (his moral philosophy), and literary practice (his choice of genre).

The skills modeled and enabled by the essay were integral to the developing cultural eco-system of print culture.[14] R. Lane Kauffmann writes: "Revealing rather than concealing its rhetorical character, the essay carries on its Socratic mission: the critical discussion of culture in the public sphere."[15] Inadvertently, I think, Kauffmann echoes Addison's famous remark, "It was said of Socrates, that he brought Philosophy down from Heaven, to inhabit among Men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables, and in Coffee-Houses."[16] This Socratic mission is mediated by the press, and I read Hume's "Of the Liberty of the Press," which immediately follows "Delicacy," as a companion to that introductory piece. "Press" addresses the material conditions of the circulation in which the *Essays* participate, offering the necessary public complement to the more personal concerns of "Delicacy." Hume emphasizes the political uses of the press as a vehicle of popular interest (it is a conduit of political alarm, for instance [12]), but the press mediates "the learning, wit, and genius of the nation" as well: "The spirit of the people must frequently be rouzed, in order to curb the ambitions of the court; and the dread of rouzing this spirit must be employed to prevent that ambition. Nothing so effectual to this purpose as the liberty of the press, by which all the learning, wit, and genius of the nation may be employed on the side of freedom, and every one animated to its defense. As long, therefore, as the republican part of our government can maintain itself against the monarchical, it will naturally be careful to keep the press open, as of importance to its own preservation" (12–13). The critical discussions of the republic of letters both serve and are protected by the republican tendencies of Britain's mixed government. Throughout, the *Essays* are organized by analogies between social and personal dynamics, each of which responds to the other. If the community of letters enables the delicacy of taste needed to harness the delicacy of passion, the work of the essay itself (a little model of the process of refinement) is likewise needed to drive the public conversation that is the environment of those belles-lettres.

Origins: Habits and History

First published in the posthumous edition of 1777, "Of the Origin of Government" was Hume's final addition to the *Essays*. It offers a summary of his analytic habits, one that applies to the form of the *Essays* as well as the history of politics.

"Origin" is organized by Hume's usual dynamic of excess and correction, staging three thought experiments that in their variety and their end point (historical accident, not natural reason) suggest the interplay of necessity, natural inclination, and habit, which grounds Hume's account of origins (37).

In the first movement of the essay, Hume starts with the defining axiom that political societies are established to secure justice, the basis of peace and stability. Though everyone can readily recognize the necessity of this, people (imperfect creatures) can be seduced from their real but distant interests by present desires. Consequently magistrates are instituted to enforce justice, and a new duty of obedience is invented to support justice; "the tyes of equity must be corroborated by those of allegiance" (37–38). But how, Hume asks, is the duty of obedience any more secure than the fragile duty of justice, which is so easily abandoned? "Peculiar interests and present temptations may overcome the one as well as the other" (38). To address this question Hume runs a second thought experiment, covering the same ground he just went over but this time in the key of experience: "Experience, however, proves, that there is a great difference between the cases . . . and our duty to the magistrate is more strictly guarded by the principles of human nature, than our duty to our fellow-citizens" (38–39). Rather than considerations of abstract justice, now interest and habit ground the political order. Magistrates have an interest in securing justice and stability; they establish institutions (ministry and military) that have an interest in supporting magisterial authority; and once established, such institutions become familiar and habitual: "Habit soon consolidates what other principles of human nature had imperfectly founded; and men, once accustomed to obedience, never think of departing from that path, in which they and their ancestors have constantly trod, and to which they are confined by so many urgent and visible motives" (39). The habit of obedience, not natural justice, is the original social glue in the revised account.

Once again, though, Hume stops and raises a problem. "But though this progress of human affairs may appear certain and inevitable, and though the support which allegiance brings to justice, be founded on obvious principles of human nature, it cannot be expected that men should beforehand be able to discover them, or foresee their operation. Government commences more casually and more imperfectly" (39). Hume then runs a third thought experiment, this time building up society from a state of war, where one person rises, secures authority, and is supported because order is preferable to disorder (39–40). As this continues people get used to submission, the chief becomes judge, and he establishes his authority by force and consent. Now habit precedes the establishment of the order that creates new levers of interest and a new, political necessity (40).[17] While never really getting down to historical particulars, Hume moves in his three thought experiments on the origin of government from natural reason to experience to history. An abstract claim (about natural duties) raises a question

(about habitual obedience) that's answered by experience, which in turn gives rise to a claim about history: government is based on natural principles but ones that emerge over time. The abstractions of natural reason with which the essay started and which initially seemed to ground the discussion are products of the history they explain.

In his account of "The Essay as Form," Adorno says the genre "revolts above all against the doctrine—deeply rooted since Plato—that the changing and ephemeral is unworthy of philosophy; against that ancient injustice toward the transitory."[18] In these terms, Hume's account of natural duties as historically emergent suggests an essayistic reorientation of the question of origins. Hume's analysis emphasizes the multiple and mutually compounding origins of government, the interaction of natural impulse and contingent forms, and the persistence of those accidental forms in time. And while attending to these intertwined origins, the essay itself offers three overlapping analyses, each of which supplements the others without quite displacing them. (Its question moves from the interaction of necessity and natural inclination to the interaction of natural inclination and historical forms.) In the process, the question of origins is subtly undermined—our abstract terms are themselves effects of the history they seem to ground—but not completely. If the essay shows the historicity of our terms (Adorno says, "Under the glance of the essay second nature becomes conscious of itself as first nature"), it also demonstrates their natural efficacy.[19] "Origin" engages the ephemeral artifacts of time in a form that mimics that "original" movement in time, erecting no scaffolding but generating local patterns which determine the next step, if not a definitive or final overall design. And here, I think, Adorno's several comments about the essay may be brought together. If the genre focuses on the changing and the contingent, its own dynamics (coordinating elements without an edifice) offer a formal correlative to those historical dynamics. "Origin" exemplifies this, modeling the hopscotch movement from local impasse to contingent solution and historical inertia that defines the origin of government for Hume. It would go too far to suggest that this final essay, in its movement from natural reason to experience and history, offers a self-reflexive comment on the origins of the *Essays* as well. But it does exemplify the habits of thinking in time—and with time's artifacts—that organize the *Essays* throughout.

Balances: Excess and Correction in Politics and Moral Philosophy

"Origin" ends by remarking the struggle between authority and liberty: "In all governments, there is a perpetual intestine struggle, open or secret, between Authority and Liberty; and neither of them can absolutely prevail in the contest. A great sacrifice of liberty must necessarily be made in every government; yet even the authority, which confines liberty, can never, and perhaps ought never, in any

constitution, to become quite entire and uncontroulable" (40). The proper balance between authority and liberty is a recurrent concern of Hume's political essays, which seek to moderate the excessive, and often empty, abstract claims made for one or the other side.[20] "The just balance between the republican and monarchical part of our constitution is really, in itself, so extremely delicate and uncertain," Hume writes in "Of the Parties of Great Britain," that there will continually be worries about its leaning too far in one direction; some people trust the court and some worry about tyranny (64–65). But though the mixed nature of Britain's government is messy and inconvenient, Hume contends it is better than a resolution of the tension that falls too far to one side or the other. Civil liberty depends on the stability of authority (41) and authority on the legitimations of liberty (51).

The moderation of excess that organizes "Delicacy" is a recurrent gesture as Hume seeks to find a proper degree of balance in various essays, political and literary alike. In "Of the Independency of Parliament" Hume critiques the Tories for their maximalist arguments against corruption and the dependence of parliament on the court, which can reward compliant MPs with perqs; the Tories should ask instead about "the proper degree of this dependence" (45).[21] Hume notes the difficulty of this (crisp extremes do make for stronger slogans): "All questions concerning the proper medium between extremes are difficult to be decided; both because it is not easy to find *words* proper to affix to this medium, and because the good and ill, in such cases, run so gradually into each other, as even to render our sentiments doubtful and uncertain" (46). Hume echoes this in "Of Simplicity and Refinement in Writing": "it is very difficult, if not impossible, to explain by words, where the just medium lies between the excesses of simplicity and refinement, to give a rule by which we can know precisely the bounds between the fault and the beauty" (194). The latter essay suggests that the problem raised by the former, the lack of exact words and lack of defined sentiments, indicates a range, not a point, of balance: "Though excesses of both kinds are to be avoided, and though a proper medium ought to be studied in all productions; yet this medium lies not in a point, but admits of a considerable latitude" (193). These analogies, a mixed politics of style or a middle style of politics, suggest the program of the *Essays*. Rather than points of poise, they offer space for "farther reflections," which may undercut certainty but also enable the adjustments to time and circumstance that are the stuff of historical experience, if not always philosophy.

Hume uses analogous dynamics to explain politics (the tension between liberty and authority) and style (simplicity and refinement). He likewise draws an analogy between sects in the learned world and factions in the political world ("Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature," 80). In four essays on "the sentiments of sects, that naturally form themselves in the world" (138), Hume explores the tension between liberty and authority in an existential register, which he tries (not completely successfully) to capture by writing each essay in a somewhat distinct

stylistic register. "The Epicurean" is written in a rhapsodic style, including an uncharacteristic imitation of Tasso: "while the wanton spring pours upon you all her blooming honours, let not glory seduce you, with her delusive blaze, to pass in perils and dangers this delicious season, this prime of life" (143). The luxuriance of the prose is meant to suggest the pleasures it describes, and the overwrought, dreadful style (which is deeply unfair to Tasso), indeed, makes Hume's argument against it. You cannot take this stuff for long. When one turns to "The Stoic," then, which is written in Hume's characteristically lucid prose, it is with aesthetic relief even if not with full agreement. "Everything is sold to skill and labour; and where nature furnishes the materials, they are still rude and unfinished, till industry, ever active and intelligent, refines them from their brute state, and fits them for human use and convenience" (147). It is only a nominal paradox that "simplicity" of writing goes with stoic refinement, while "refinement" of writing goes with epicurean indulgence of nature. It takes more work, of course, to rein in prose than let it run free.

If the Epicurean seizes time ("if life be frail . . . we should well employ the present moment" [145]), the Stoic notes it keeps moving despite one's best efforts: "Your indolence itself becomes a fatigue. Your pleasure itself creates a disgust" (150). Recognizing this, one should "pay to virtue what he owes to nature" and "make a generous gift of what must otherwise be ravished from him by necessity!" (153). This stirring finale is unusually exhortatory (Hume rarely exclaims), but it makes a characteristically Humean point about adjusting one's position to nature and necessity. The polar excesses of effort and relaxation are evident here, even before they are explicitly mediated in "The Sceptic." If pleasures fade in time, so too do efforts weaken. "The Platonist" offers one answer to this, a point of reference beyond time and the "feverish uncertainty and irresolution, in human conduct" (155). Tranquility comes in contemplation of the divine, not "in the ignoble pursuits of sensual pleasure or popular applause" (156). Though compelling in its attack on philosophical vanity—"O philosopher! Thy wisdom is vain, and thy virtue unprofitable. Thou seekest the ignorant applauses of men, not the solid reflections of thy own conscience" (156–57)—the Platonist's pompous, archaic diction undermines the claim. It is as if Hume cannot imagine anyone in the present actually saying such things—though "thy" and "thou" suggest the diction of the pulpit as well. Perhaps this is Hume's attempt at comic irony, a burlesque of a voice so bombastically self-important that it sinks under the weight of its own sublime rhetorical trappings. In any event, these essays are dialogically voiced—in turn dreamy, urgent, and weepy—and dialectically argued, offering distillations of opposed moral philosophical principles that are balanced, if not quite resolved, by "The Sceptic."

Well, "The Sceptic," which may give Hume's own position, does not exactly balance as much as recognize the alternation between Epicurean passion and Stoic

attention.[22] Reading through the matched essays gives you the experience of entertaining each position, dwelling in it and moving on, that is the starting point of "Sceptic." Echoing the opening of "Platonist," the Sceptic notes the variety and changeableness of desire. But while the Platonist seeks an answer to this uncertainty by looking for a still point in the flux through contemplation of the perfect, the Sceptic thinks in time, and makes time the central condition of thought. It is a mistake to confine oneself to one principle (or to a principle of One): "besides the different inclinations of different men, everyone's experience may convince him, that each of these kinds of life is agreeable in its turn, and that their variety or their judicious mixture chiefly contributes to the rendering all of them agreeable" (160).[23] There is no point of perfect balance because there is no point outside of time. Rather, and here Hume echoes the lesson of political moderation, it is the successive movement between positions, not resting in a single principle—or a fanciful escape beyond experience—in which moral, like political, happiness consists. Each opposing position is, ironically, true (or at least compelling) in turn. This makes hash of speculative principles and intellectual consistency, but the essay asks us to think in time, not in contemplative abstraction.[24]

Hume argues that the effects of philosophy are weak and limited, and general maxims have little influence except as they affect taste and sentiment (169). This is the rationale for the stylistic efforts of philosophical writing, which appeal to sentiments and seek to find (or form) a shared taste for its take. In these terms, the form of the *Essays* is integral to their claims. Rather than delivering abstract lessons (about true origins or proper ends), they work indirectly, modeling a habitual movement between claims: "the chief benefit that arises from philosophy, arises in an indirect manner, and proceeds more from its secret, insensible influence, than from its immediate application" (170). In both Hume's political and moral essays, abstract principles serve as poles between which an ideal but inexact balance oscillates, a range of responses to changing circumstances that is secured by habit and not by principle. "Here then is the chief triumph of art and philosophy: It insensibly refines the temper, and it points out to us those dispositions which we should endeavour to attain, by a constant *bent* of the mind, and by repeated *habit*" (171). Here again, time is an active, structuring element in Hume's thinking and in the *Essays*, the condition of forming the habits that mediate the various poles of liberty and authority, simplicity and refinement, epicurean release and stoic development.

Standards: Common Forms and Self-Formation

"Sceptic" arrives at habit, like "Origin," but from the direction of the personal self-formation of "Delicacy." The final essay of the first volume of the *Essays*, "Of the Standard of Taste," explores the interaction and mutual dependence of these

two aspects of habit. And it offers a model of the organizing patterns of the *Essays* more generally, the winnowing movements between general claims and local applications that help form the socializing dispositions Hume values as politically and morally moderating.

"Standard" starts with some prefatory remarks on variety and general terms. There is, of course, a variety of taste, and it is even greater in reality than appearance because general terms can hide particular differences (227). We all like the beautiful, but disagree about what is beautiful. Likewise, we all praise the good—the good, like the beautiful, is what is praiseworthy—and Hume makes an analogous argument about ethics (228).[25] The essay's first couple of pages imply that aesthetic and moral questions may dovetail; an answer to one may address the other, and even provide a way into the other if the analogy holds. The pendant discussion at the end of the essay returns to these concerns, but from a different, complicating angle. (At the end different cultural mores block general aesthetic agreement, suggesting a limit to the opening analogy.) The essay indulges in some throat-clearing to reach its main topic, a leisurely start that is reflected in its drifting end, but it does have some balance.[26] The essay will argue that taste, too, works through indirection, and perhaps these bookending paragraphs on the limits of general terms, moral or aesthetic, offer a tonal frame for the essay, a hedge against any undue certainty in a discussion finally concerned more with the uses of local standards than the existence of an universal one.

Hume states the issue some three pages in: "It is natural for us to seek a *Standard of Taste*; a rule, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a decision, afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another" (229). The "diminishing expectations" of the sentence are notable and have been well remarked.[27] But the narrowing of the project's parameters (which ratchets down from a global standard or rule to a local basis for decision) is itself framed by a modest and perhaps self-evident initial premise. It is natural to *seek* a standard, not necessarily to find one, and certainly not necessarily to find a natural one. Desiring such a standard is an effect of our propensity to herd and share. Presumably those happy innocents who do not feel such a desire to find common ground would not be reading such an essay. One such unconcerned person might be a skeptic (or someone in a skeptical, philosophical mood), whose position is sketched by way of asking whether it is worth pursuing the inquiry at all. Hume repeats a key claim of "Sceptic": "Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them, and each mind perceives a different beauty" (230).[28] In this, common sense, for once, agrees with skepticism; there is no arguing taste. But, and here Hume makes the first of the turns that punctuate and organize the essay (about a third of the paragraphs begin with "But"), we do make judgments, especially about extreme cases (230–31).[29] Or more exactly, there are widely agreed-upon judgments: Addison's is model prose while Bunyan's is not (231).[30]

"Standard" is organized by the familiar turn from doubt to common sense, from an undermining skepticism about a strict account of taste (it is completely idiosyncratic) to the fact of general community standards (which you can recognize whether or not you agree with them). Though without accurate philosophical grounding, such standards exist in the fuzzy, inexact, and potent world of common experience. Rules of art are, like all practical sciences, records of experience, not a priori rules, "general observations concerning what has been universally found to please in all countries and all ages" (231). Hume suggests that the "durable admiration" for some works—like Homer's, which are still admired in modern London as they were in ancient Athens—expresses "the original structure of the internal fabric" that responds to them (233), a claim about a universal human nature prior to the habitual structures that usually ground his thinking. Perhaps Hume really does believe, like a good neo-classicist, that the ancients got it right, and learning Homer is learning human nature. (In that he would be, as his own model predicts, no more than a product of his time and its commonplaces.) Or perhaps this claim about the "original structure" should be understood on the model of "Origin," less a preexisting principle than the effect of a long-term co-evolution of inclination and habit. It is less that Homer recorded some originary human nature than that he offers the structures through which it is—or was—still understood. (It still was for Hume because his education featured Latin and Greek literature. Homer's influence now is more indirect, as we may learn to think of the human in terms of the works that adapt the *Odyssey*, by Joyce or the Coen Brothers, rather than Homer himself.)

Your experience may differ, of course, but if you do not like Homer, the problem is with you, not him. Sometimes you are not in the right mood or do not have the right background to appreciate such works (232). But even with the requisite calm and thoughtful attention, there still there may be "defects in the internal organs" and in particular a "want of the *delicacy* of the imagination" (233) that keep you from tasting what common sense endorses. Hume then offers a "more accurate definition of delicacy," which he conducts through a scene from *Don Quixote*: Sancho explains the delicacy of his taste by telling a tall tale about his kinsmen who detected traces of iron and leather in wine from a barrel that was later revealed to contain a key on a leather thong. This is a boisterous joke in the original; the key at the bottom of its source that gives it its flavor is Sancho, the proverbial voice of good-natured Rabelaisian excess. (When Sancho drinks from a wineskin he "tilted it back and put it to his mouth and looked at the stars for a quarter of an hour."[31]) I take Hume's use of Sancho as a joke. To explain his own good taste, Sancho tells a story about the fine discriminations his family is capable of. These suspect associations ground the analogy between physical and mental taste. As Christopher MacLachlan has discussed, this claim (and the use of the Sancho story more generally) is rife with irony.[32] Though general rules are said to be like the key on the thong (235), Hume has just noted that secondary qualities

like beauty exist only in the mind (230). The precise analogy here between the objects of physical and mental taste, as David Marshall cleverly suggests, should be between the key and the tongue that could taste the traces of iron and leather.[33] But of course the point of the proverbial difference of taste is that we do not share the same tongue, and we apply general terms differently. (Even inheriting a tongue from one's family does not mean you inherit its taste.) The general observations of common sense disguise the lack of common sensation. And the proposed analogy with the taste of iron conveys at best a taste for irony, not a real test of the existence of something analogous to a key to taste.

The experience of taste, though, perhaps *is* best understood through such an ironic key. Something like the habit of irony, minding the gap between general expectations and particular experience, defines the processes of developing taste. Sancho's story is a red herring; the real source of his fine discernment in wine is his abundant experience with drinking (though of course it is always nice to have smoked fish and good stories with wine). And likewise, if indeed Hume means Sancho to model delicacy, we too can learn it through practice. "But though there be naturally a wide difference in point of delicacy between one person and another, nothing tends further to encrease and improve this talent, than practice in a particular art, and the frequent survey or contemplation of a particular species of beauty" (237). After all the talk about natural delicacy, it turns out to mean as little as those general moral terms that hide particular differences. But (perhaps) unlike that moral impasse, delicacy can be improved, and precisely by shuttling between those inherited general rules and the "failures" or limits of your own idiosyncrasies. If there is no real key to taste, you can use the pretense of a key (a fiction about such a key) to develop your own. In a brief practical manual on taste, Hume positions those general rules as tools for developing taste. Practice and comparison will help you overcome the limits of your own individual circumstances by enabling you to put yourself in a general position, which will help you, also, develop the good sense to check your prejudices (237–40). Learning to adopt a general perspective teaches you, for instance, to allow for different customs, to put aside personal feelings about the author, and take account of a work's purpose and genre (239–40). Here the historical experiment of general rules is part of a process through which to conduct your own personal experiment or trial of taste.

Hume has moved from doubt about the irrevocable particularity of taste to a discussion of general, historically tested rules of taste, and then from those general rules to a discussion of the delicacy of particular tastes. In the latter discussion, those general rules, first introduced to sidestep the skeptical impasse, are recast as tools to test and train one's own particular taste. To exemplify this, Hume sketches a model critic who manifests the work enabled by those general rules, one with strong sense and delicate sentiment improved by practice, perfected by comparisons, and cleared of prejudice (241). This is a move from ironic standards

to absent embodiments of them: "But where are such critics to be found?" Hume asks in embarrassment, "By what marks are they to be known? How distinguish them from pretenders?" (241). Arriving back at a version of the initial uncertainty, but now presented as a question of standard-bearers, not standards, Hume repeats the move to sociological assertion. Such characters are valued, whether or not a particular person fits the bill (242). While localizing standards in exemplars does not remove the difficulty of identifying such people (which poses the same problem as identifying standards), it does suggest that taste follows the paths of sympathy and emulation.[34] Placed in the social context that Peter Jones emphasizes as the framework of Hume's aesthetics, the circular analysis becomes a social feedback loop.[35] Hume's discussion of standards has moved from a question of an individual vis-à-vis an abstract general model to someone face-to-face with others, whom one may emulate or argue with. And here the skeptical impasse (where are such critics?) is answered not just with an abstract common experience but in the specific shape of one's local circle of friends, mentors, and rivals.

Ideal, if absent, critics and ideal, if ironic, standards have the status of the general arguments of the essay's opening, self-evidently true but debatable when it comes to particulars. Hume is particularly unhelpful in discussing general rules, only asserting they exist and they are tools for particular uses. This is unsatisfying if you want an account of universal taste or if you want a critique of coercively universal standards.[36] But I do not think Hume argues either that there is a single general standard or that general standards are useless. Rather, standards evolve over time, and precisely via the particular uses to which they are put by people who adopt them—and of course adapt them—to develop their own tastes. Standards are the inherited registers of habit and tools to develop your own.

Hume concludes with two moves, first minimizing the problem and then complicating it irrevocably. He claims there is historically less variation in taste than in speculative opinion, a dubious claim he bases on the continuing popularity of Terence and Virgil (242–43). (That the former is no longer a name to conjure with could perhaps suggest the opposite claim.) But even if Hume is right and taste is not so historically variable (such an argument could be made in terms of the entropy of inherited forms), it finally seems even more intransigently variable at the personal level. Despite all efforts to fix a standard, two sources of variety remain, one's particular disposition (244) and cultural differences (246). These limits on the efficacy of general standards suggest two final points. Universal standards of taste finally turn out to be local, and such standards are useful in practice but limited in theory. The essay (and this volume of the *Essays*) winds down into another, familiar oscillation between general claims and particular cases as it exhibits the restless—perhaps endless—processes of mediation and balancing that are at the heart of both Hume's philosophical habits and the genre of the essay. General standards are effects of long-term historical experiments that are,

in turn, local tools for personal experiments. Perhaps standards work like essays: local constellations of mediate forms, provisional and experimental, that depend on further uses to survive and that guide but do not determine those new uses. At once vehicles for self-development (you use common forms to form your passions) and vehicles of social development (the energy of particular uses, trials, essays is what drives the coordinated learning of civil society), essays are the formal shape of standards, interim reports on the state of the field but open to—hopeful for, expectant of—continual adjustment and refinement.

Civil Liberties: Tentative Conclusions

In "Origin," Hume writes of history as the effect of the interaction of natural inclinations and accidental forms. In "Of Civil Liberty" he writes for history, though not in the usual sense of that phrase. Hume certainly was concerned with name and fame; in "Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature," he comments that "to love the fame of laudable actions approaches so near the love of laudable actions for their own sake, that these passions are more capable of mixture, than any other kinds of affection" (86). But he also writes for history in the sense of participating in an on-going large-scale historical experiment of the sort he outlines in "Origin." "Civil Liberty" opens, startlingly, with a remark that "the world is still too young to fix many general truths in politics, which will remain true to the latest posterity. We have as yet not had experience of three thousand years; so that not only the art of reasoning is still imperfect in this science, as in all others, but we even want sufficient materials upon which we can reason" (87). Making general claims about the experiment that is history therefore calls for modesty and hesitancy: "whatever any one should advance on that head [comparing civil liberty and absolute government] would, in all probability, be refuted by further experience, and be rejected by posterity. Such mighty revolutions have happened in human history, and so many events have arisen contrary to the expectations of the ancients, that they are sufficient to beget the suspicion of still further changes" (89). Hume says that British belles-lettres are still inferior to ancient Roman literature, so busy have the British been arguing religion, politics, and philosophy. And even in these fields, "we have not any standard-book, which we can transmit to posterity: And the utmost we have to boast of, are a few essays towards a more just philosophy; which, indeed, promise well, but have not as yet, reached any degree of perfection" (92). In Hume's conventional bemoaning of the state of literature I hear a note of pride about the openness of British philosophy to time and change. Hume uses "essays" here—promising trials—to suggest an immature state of learning, but in the context of the opening claim of the essay (less than three thousand years of experience), it is surely false humility to stress its imperfection. Essays, rather than standard-books, demonstrate the perfection of British methods, and precisely

in their structure of "farther reflections," their willingness to think in time and participate in an on-going, open-ended historical process.

Hume says philosophy is good for two things. (He also says you do not need philosophy to teach you these home truths; but those with a bent for abstraction can learn them there.) Philosophy can remind you of the shortness of life and teach you proper perspective, correcting the tendency only to look up in envy at those who seem to have it better than you ("Sceptic," 176–77). I want to pun on these useful moral lessons and read them methodologically as well. Hume gears his *Essays* to the on-going movement of time as the condition for both the materials and procedures of thinking: We think with historically contingent categories and in the on-going stream of our particular experiences. And these processes themselves provide the terms for understanding human progress. In "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences" as well, Hume says we should look down. Again citing Ovid, this time his version of the familiar claim that poets are divinely inspired, Hume here takes issue with the poet: "There is not, however, any thing supernatural in the case. Their fire is not kindled from heaven. It only runs along the earth; is caught from one breast to another; and burns brightest, where the materials are best prepared, and most happily disposed" (114). This dynamic of catching fire is sketched less metaphorically in "Standard": "Many men, when left to themselves, have but a faint and dubious perception of beauty, who yet are capable of relishing any fine stroke, which is pointed out to them. Every convert to the admiration of the real poet or orator is the cause of some new conversion" (243). The last line borders on redundancy, but I do not think Hume is sloppily describing a circle (a convert's conversion) but rather a civil network, a chain of conversions as one person eagerly shares with others what she's learned to love. Standards of taste, like the poetry they respond to, do not come from on high but rather are recommendations from all around, invitations to try what others have liked, and so invitations to participate in the historical processes of forming—and reforming—standards. Or, to return to Hume's metaphor, which Adorno also uses to explain the procedures of essays: "the effort of the essay reflects a childlike freedom that catches fire, without scruple, on what others have done."[37] Hume's *Essays* are framed to convert youthful appetites into elegant passions, and like Ovid's humanizing art, they hope to teach their readers as well to understand, to properly value, and to participate in the cultivation of those common fires.

NOTES

For helpful comments on earlier drafts of this essay, I'd like to thank Lauren Shohet, Barry Weller, Andy Franta, Matt Potolsky, Corliss Swain, and Saul Traiger.

1 In the Foreword to his edition of David Hume's *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), Eugene F. Miller writes: "The preparation and revision of his essays occupied Hume throughout his adult life. . . . the essays were by no means of casual interest to Hume" (xii, xiv). Miller discusses the details of the various editions, additions, and revisions of the *Essays* (xii–xv), and their reception and popularity (xv–xvi). All references to the *Essays* are to this edition, and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

2 In *The Suasive Art of David Hume* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), M. A. Box argues that the *Treatise* itself can be understood as a kind of essay (93–97), though a different strand of the generic tradition than the *Essays* themselves (147). For an excellent account of Hume's use of the essay for his anti-foundational philosophy, see Timothy H. Engström, "Foundational Standards and Conversational Style: The Humean Essay as an Issue of Philosophical Genre," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 30 (1997): 150–75.

3 For good accounts of the essay in these terms, see John McCarthy, *Crossing Boundaries: A Theory and History of Essay Writing in German, 1680–1815* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), chaps. 1–3; and Claire de Obaldia, *The Essayistic Spirit: Literature, Modern Criticism, and the Essay* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), chap. 1. John Richetti notes that Hume's ethos, even in the *Treatise*, is that of "a witty amateur very much like the persona behind the eighteenth-century familiar essay." *Philosophical Writing: Locke, Berkeley, Hume* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 186.

4 Scott Black, *Of Essays and Reading in Early Modern Britain* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), Introduction and chap. 1.

5 Mary Chudleigh describes her *Essays* as a way of processing "new and useful Hints," which she "strive[s] to improve by Writing; that firmly fixes what I know, deeply imprinting the Truths I've learn'd"; such writing serves as a tool of moral philosophy by which to reduce "Knowledge into Practice, and live those Truths we have been learning." *Essays upon Several Subjects*, in *The Poems and Prose of Mary, Lady Chudleigh*, ed. Margaret J. M. Ezell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 245–390, 246, 257–58. For a similar, Scottish claim, see William Anstruther, "The Preface to the Reader," *Essays, Moral and Divine* (Edinburgh, 1701). For my account of the *Spectator*, see Black, *Of Essays and Reading in Early Modern Britain*, chap. 4, and for my brief account of Locke's *Essay*, pp. 7–8.

6 Box, *The Suasive Art of David Hume*, 124, 138. See Box's discussion of Hume's early "essays of apprenticeship," which were modeled on Addison and withdrawn from later editions (124–29). David Fate Norton notes that Hume's *Essays* and *History* are continuations of his earliest work. "An Introduction to Hume's Thought," *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, ed. David Fate Norton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1–32, 21.

7 Samuel Johnson's periodical essays, the *Rambler* (1750) and the *Idler* (1758–1760), were contemporary with Hume's *Essays* and offer a point of contrast in both style (Latinate and hypotactic) and procedure. In *Samuel Johnson and the Essay* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), Robert D. Spector relates Johnson's essays to Baconian and Lockean empiricism, and describes their procedure as "setting up a general assertion to be examined meticulously, challenging it from various points of view, and finally . . . attempting to provide the result with some universal significance or application"

(2; see also 4–5, 16). Johnson's aspiration to a rounded off conclusion distinguishes his essays from Hume's and, indeed, from many other contemporary essays.

8 Eduardo Nicol, quoted by Phillip Lopate, "Introduction," *The Art of the Personal Essay* (New York: Anchor, 1994), xxiii–liv, xxxvii. John McCarthy, "The Philosopher as Essayist: Leibniz and Kant," *The Philosopher as Writer*, ed. Robert Ginsberg (Cranbury, NJ: Associated Universities Press, 1987), 48–74, 50.

9 Associations in Annette C. Baier's broad sense: "The ties between perceptions seem to be biological and social ties writ small in the soul." *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's* Treatise (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 3. Baier's outline of the three sorts of association in the *Treatise*—"associations of persons, associations of passions or reflexive impressions, associations of ideas. . . . the last should be understood in light of Hume's claims about the other two" (52)—suggests an essayistic recursion that adopts as foundational those fuzzy commonplaces that define the genre: "Hume's naturalism in epistemology takes human nature as the nature closest at hand, and takes our nature to be social and passionate before it is cognitive"; "for understanding our understanding, Hume's preferred metaphors are taken from our social and passionate life" (28–29).

10 Theodor Adorno, "The Essay as Form," trans. Bob Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will, *The Adorno Reader*, ed. Brian O'Connor (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 91–111, 102, 109.

11 The lines are from Ovid's *Epistulae Ex Ponto*: "Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes, / Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros"; "the liberal arts . . . soften / the heart, drive harshness out." *The Poems of Exile: Tristia and the Black Sea Letters*, trans. Peter Green (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 122.

12 Nature "cures" what reason cannot at T 1.4.7.9 (SBN 269). References to the *Treatise* are to David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary Norton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), abbreviated "T" in the text and cited by Book, part, section, and paragraph number, followed by the page number in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed., revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), abbreviated "SBN" in the text. See Peter Jones's discussion of the pendulum metaphor in Hume and his Newtonian thinking more generally, both in the service of a Ciceronian balance. "Art and Moderation in Hume's Essays," *McGill Hume Studies*, ed. David Fate Norton, Nicholas Capaldi, and Wade L. Robison (San Diego: Austin Hill Press, 1979), 161–80, 168–69; and *Hume's Sentiments: Their Ciceronian and French Context* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1982), 155.

13 Fred Parker, *Scepticism and Literature: An Essay on Pope, Hume, Sterne, and Johnson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 140, 144, 148. David Simpson sees the dialogue as the appropriate stylistic medium for this kind of oscillation, this tactic of balance and hesitation. "Hume's Intimate Voices and the Method of Dialogue," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 21 (1979): 68–92, 82, 84–85. It is equally the style and form of the essay.

14 Black, *Of Essays and Reading in Early Modern Britain*, 10–12, 63–64.

15 R. Lane Kauffmann, "Essaying as Unmethodical Method," *Essays on the Essay: Redefining the Genre*, ed. Alexander J. Butrym (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 221–40, 234. Denise Gigante remarks that "by the mid-eighteenth century, the

essay had emerged as a premier literary form in which cultural values were stated and disputed." "Introduction," *The Great Age of the English Essay: An Anthology*, ed. Denise Gigante (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), xv–xxxiii, xvii. See Ralph S. Pomeroy on the *Essays*' rhetorical program of testing ideas by circulating them. "Hume's Proposed League of the Learned and Conversible Worlds," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 19 (1986): 373–94, 391, 394. Box remarks that the rhetorical task of the *Essays* is to excite curiosity and inculcate the habit of experimental reasoning (58).

16 Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 1:44. I discuss this passage in Black, *Of Essays and Reading in Early Modern Britain*, 101–103. Hume's withdrawn "Of Essay-Writing" glosses this Addisonian aspiration (533–37).

17 Things continue in a "feeble state, till the farther progress of improvement procured the magistrate a revenue, and enabled him to bestow rewards on the several instruments of his administration, and to inflict punishments on the refractory and disobedient" (40). With the establishment of such an improved administration "submission was no longer a matter of choice in the bulk of the community, but was rigorously exacted by the authority of the supreme magistrate" (40).

18 Adorno, "The Essay as Form," 98. "The depreciation of the historically produced, as an object of theory, is therefore corrected by the essay. . . . It does not insist stubbornly on a realm transcending all mediations—and they are the historical ones in which the whole of society is sedimented—rather the essay seeks truth contents as being historical in themselves" (99).

19 Adorno, "The Essay as Form," 107.

20 Hume argues against pure principles and abstractions that either do not mean anything, like theological debates ("Of Parties in General," 59–60), or are only trivially true, like arguments about divine right and the original contract. In "Of the Original Contract," he says the opposed speculative principles about government being authorized by divine right or founded on an original contract are both trivially true (if you believe in Providence, everything is controlled by it; likewise all government depends on consent to some degree) and indefensible in their extreme forms (466–68). "My intention here is not to exclude all consent of the people from being one just foundation of government where it has place. It is surely the best and most sacred of any. I only pretend, that it has very seldom had place in any degree, and almost never in its full extent. And therefore some other foundation of government must also be admitted" (474). These other foundations are force, violence, and habit (470–71).

21 Of course "such moderation is not to be expected in party-men of any kind" (45).

22 I do think "Sceptic" probably gives Hume's own philosophical sentiments, but I also think it is finally not important—to my reading of the essay, at least—whether it does so or not. If, as I read it, the essay offers a model of a particular mode of thinking, the significant question is how it's used by a reader, not whether it's an authentic expression of the writer. Of course I recognize that for some readers the essay may be more useful if this is authentically Hume's position, but using the essay does not depend on that. (We regularly take fictional characters, actions, and ideas as positive or negative models; indeed we do so with the other three essays in this series.)

23 Hume echoes this in "Of Refinement in the Arts," where he writes that human happiness consists of a proper mix of action, pleasure, and indolence (269–70).

24 In "Of Parties in General," Hume writes: "Parties from *principle*, especially abstract speculative principle, are known only to modern times, and are, perhaps, the most extraordinary and unaccountable *phœnomenon*, that has yet appeared in human affairs" (60).

25 "The merit of delivering true general principles in ethics is indeed very small. Whoever recommends any moral virtues really does no more than implied in the terms themselves" (229).

26 Christopher MacLachlan considers the opening "digression on morality" a "literary blemish." "Hume and the Standard of Taste," *Hume Studies* 12 (1986): 18–38, 22. Robert Ginsberg says the ending of the essay "dribbles away" and is "intellectually dissatisfying." "The Literary Structure and Strategy of Hume's Essay on the Standard of Taste," in Ginsberg, *The Philosopher as Writer*, 199–237, 228.

27 David Marshall, "Arguing by Analogy: Hume's Standard of Taste," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28 (1995): 323–43, 325.

28 "Sceptic": "there is nothing, in itself, valuable or despicable, desirable or hateful, beautiful or deformed; but . . . these attributes arise from the particular constitution and fabric of human sentiment and affection" (162; see also 166).

29 Marshall remarks the "buts" (327), as does Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 64.

30 Hume's statement is an accurate account of their eighteenth-century reputations. Addison was indeed recommended and taken quite literally as a model. Samuel Johnson famously called Addison's prose "the model of the middle style." "Life of Addison," *Lives of the Poets*, ed. G. B. Hill, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1905), 3:149. Benjamin Franklin writes that he developed his own style by imitating the *Spectator*. *Autobiography*, ed. Kenneth Silverman (New York: Penguin, 1986), 14–15. And the *Spectator* is still cited as the hallmark of good taste in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, first published in 1817. Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. John Davie (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 22. But Hume's statement also points to a problem. Bunyan was, in fact, also popular, but in different circles. *The Pilgrim's Progress* has been a perennial bestseller from its original publication in 1678 and 1684. See Isabel Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim's Progress* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) for a fascinating account of its international influence as a central Protestant text—for Puritans in the early modern Anglo-American world and for nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries around the globe. These particulars complicate Hume's general claims, and suggest—despite his main point—that there are disparate communities of taste and conflicting standards, each of which works as Hume describes but without an overarching standard that can resolve their differences. (Hume returns to a version of this problem at the end.) Perhaps Hume's gambit is to find or create a community organized around a taste for such questions about taste, even if particular tastes differ. This would be a version of an Addisonian community formed around polite conversation, not a Bunyanesque one formed around enthusiastic interests.

31 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, trans. Edith Grossman (New York: Ecco, 2005), 537.

32 MacLachlan, "Hume and the Standard of Taste," 29–30, and see 18–20.

33 Marshall, "Arguing by Analogy," 333.

34 In "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," Hume says: "A noble emulation is the source of every excellence" (135).

35 Peter Jones, "Hume's Literary and Aesthetic Theory," in *Cambridge Companion to Hume*, 255–80, 255, 260. Peter Kivy argues that the circularity or regress of Hume's analysis here—standards grounded in standard-bearers who know standards—may be its greatest strength. "Hume's Standard of Taste: Breaking the Circle," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 7 (1967): 57–66. Whether or not this evaluation is correct, I follow Jones in finding the translation of analytic circularity into social terms the significant move.

36 As Dabney Townsend notes, this is not an essay on taste, but an essay on standards. *Hume's Aesthetic Theory: Taste and Sentiment* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 193, 201–202. And as Neil Saccamano argues, the generalizing operations of taste-formation are not "an intrusive social instrument of calibration" but an account of self-correcting experience. "Parting with Prejudice: Hume, Identity, and Aesthetic Universality," *Politics and the Passions 1500–1850*, ed. Victoria Kahn, Neil Saccamano, and Daniela Coli (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 175–95, 182.

37 Adorno, "The Essay as Form," 93.