Introduction

According to the philosophical tradition, human beings are possessed by powerful desires to know the truth about nature and the world around them. They have a natural restlessness of mind that cannot be satisfied with beliefs accepted on authority, on faith, or by convention. They seek to know the truth about first causes, about the sufficient as opposed to merely necessary causes of things, and about whether the world hangs together as an intelligible whole or is only an accidental heap of things. According to that same tradition, however, such radical or foundational questioning is dangerous. What if one set off in search of the ultimate cause and came up empty? If the quest for insight starts by undermining the accepted beliefs, where does that leave us if the object of the quest proves elusive and the quest Sisyphean? One cannot possibly know in advance, of course, where such a quest will take us. But it is clear that radical questioning cannot avoid calling into question the moral and political opinions that undergird our individual and collective lives. By doubting those opinions, the natural restlessness of the mind threatens to undermine the very conditions of practical life, including the life of the questioner him or herself. Radical questioning could thus easily seem self-destructive, even tragic. Reflection on this theme, of course, runs deep in the tradition. One need only think of the comic portrayal of philosophy in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, or of the fact that the tradition of political philosophy in a sense begins with Socrates' trial on charges of corrupting the youth and disbelieving in the gods of the city.

We late moderns are aware of the problem posed by radical questioning based on experiences closer to home. Martin Heidegger, who embodied radical questioning in the twentieth century more fully than almost anyone else, participated in the Nazi movement in the 1930s. For many commentators, Heidegger's disastrous political engagement shows that radical questioning leads to relativism, leaving a space that may easily be filled with monstrosities. Yet this common criticism does not quite capture what is most problematic about Heidegger's thought and deeds. In the early 1930s, Heidegger believed

that radical questioning, for him the very core of human dignity, was in danger of being snuffed out by soulless capitalism on one side and fanatical communism on the other. Only by a collective act of will such as promised by the Nazis could the flame of radical questioning be preserved. Heidegger hoped he could use the Nazis to reestablish radical questioning at the heart of European culture, a hope that was quickly dashed. Heidegger's practical judgment about the Nazis deserves severe criticism, but we should not lose sight of a more important truth. Heidegger's colossal political misjudgment took the form that it did only because Heidegger believed, at least for one moment, that radical questioning could become the core of a healthy political culture. At that moment Heidegger believed that the tension between radical questioning and moral-political life could be overcome, with radical questioners becoming the spiritual rulers of a new European culture.[1]

Something similar could be said, of course, about Marx, the master thinker of the other great anti-liberal movement in the twentieth century. When Marx speaks in "Of the Jewish Question" of the difference between a merely political emancipation and a genuinely human one, he reveals a radical discontent with human life as presently known that rivals anything in Heidegger. He too believes that genuine human dignity is threatened by "modernity" and that only a political action, a revolution, can preserve that dignity. Surely part of the fascination that Marx exerted over many later thinkers comes from his identification of political action with matters of profound existential import.[2] Marx is like Heidegger in another respect as well. He too connects the fate of the political struggle for genuine humanity with the political action of philosophers. At the moment when the class struggle nears its decisive hour, he remarks in the "Communist Manifesto," a small section of the bourgeoisie that has "raised [itself] to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole" goes over to the proletariat, where it has the advantage "of clearly

[1] For a powerful expression of the attraction of radical questioning, see "What is Metaphysics?" in Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. by William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 82–97. For Heidegger's dream that philosophy could become the dominant political-cultural force in a reformed European culture, see "The Self-Assertion of the German University," together with the other documents included in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Richard Wolin (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 29–39. For insightful treatments of Heidegger's views on the place of radical questioning in moral-political life, see Richard Velkley, *Heidegger, Strauss, and the Premises of Philosophy: On Original Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), esp. chapters 4 and 6; Michael Gillespie, *Hegel, Heidegger, and the Ground of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); and James Ceaser, *Reconstructing America: The Symbol of America in Modern Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), chapter 8.

[2] See "Of the Jewish Question," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. by Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978), 26–52. For a helpful discussions, see Bernard Yack, *The Longing for Total Revolution: Philosophic Sources of Social Discontent from Rousseau to Marx and Nietzsche* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), chapter 7; and Francois Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. by Deborah Furet (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), esp. chapter 1.

understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement."[3] Those philosophers who understand the truth and logic of history must guide the proletariat in its inevitable revolution against the political orders and economic structures of all known societies up until the present. Strangely enough, both Marx and Heidegger believe, in their different ways, that philosophers must rule.

The practical errors of the great minds associated with the twentieth century's most destructive political movements are only too obvious to us now. Yet one has to wonder whether later thinkers have not made the opposite error. Richard Rorty, not a thinker on the level of Heidegger or Marx but illuminating nonetheless, argues that the source of our civilizational woes is the fanatical attempt, made in different ways by different philosophers, to fuse public and private by means of a foundational claim about human nature or the structure of the cosmos. His remedy is to simply drop any claim to foundational truth and to suggest that our longings for such truth are a vestige of metaphysics, the sooner escaped the better. Thus for Rorty we should affirm our moral-political communities not on the ground that they are superior in truth and justice to the alternatives, but simply because they are our tradition. For making these arguments Rorty is often charged with being a relativist or being unable to stop a slide into relativism. As in the case of Heidegger, there is truth in this criticism of Rorty, but it obscures the underlying motivation and contours of his position. Rorty fails to distinguish between a foundational teaching, which claims to have uncovered the final truth about human beings and the cosmos, and foundational questioning, which claims that the problem of foundations is unavoidable for any serious human being, even if no final answer is available. Rorty thus goes beyond the laudable attempt to remind us that our moral and political opinions are always questionable to arguing that the questions are pointless and even dangerous. The intended result of Rorty's arguments is thus to persuade us to give up on radical questioning or to redescribe it as some other form of human activity, such as rhetoric, literary criticism, or dialectic.[4] Thus Rorty wishes to keep such thinkers as Nietzsche and Heidegger as part of the canon, but he persistently describes them not as philosophers concerned with uncovering the truth (or lack thereof) about the human condition, but as examples of the aesthetic attempt to recreate the self in the light of some private ideal of perfection.[5] Rorty's effort to tame or domesticate radical

[3] *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 481, 484.

[4] See, for example, Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Steven Kautz helpfully describes Rorty as "one of our most radical and intransigent partisans of community." Kautz, *Liberalism and Community* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 86. Kautz's analysis suggests that Rorty's effort to shut down foundational questioning may well be the expression or symptom of his more fundamental desire to identify with a community, rather than a simply independent phenomenon.

[5] For examples of Rorty's efforts to redescribe Nietzsche and Heidegger in this way, see *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, xiv, 96, 99, 101, 105–08, 108–18.

questioning was no doubt motivated in part by the terrible example of Heidegger's misguided political action, but the irony is striking. In an effort to avoid Heidegger's error, Rorty unintentionally confirms Heidegger's deepest criticism of liberal democratic civilization, that it systematically denies the power and force of radical questioning.

We late moderns are thus left in a difficult position.[6] Rorty's politics are surely preferable to Heidegger's, as revealed in either the latter's early engagement with the Nazis or his later quietism. Yet Rorty is only able to purchase his liberalism at the price of denying on principle the natural restlessness of the human mind. It is doubtful, to say the least, that Rorty's project of suppressing or redefining the human desire for radical questioning can succeed in the long run. For confirmation, one need only think of the continuing challenge of religious fundamentalism in its various forms, including the Islamic fundamentalism that has so worried Western statesmen and intellectuals since September 11, 2001.[7] But if we resolve to take radical questioning seriously on its own terms, we face a quandary. Are we doomed either to pursue questions about foundations, at the cost of political sanity, or to bolster the indispensable conditions of our moral-political life, at the cost of our deepest desire and our fullest honesty about the world? Is radical questioning necessarily tragic, destructive either of the moral-political conditions or of itself?

It is in the context of these late modern worries and anxieties about philosophy and politics that the thought of David Hume comes to light as a topic worthy of investigation. Hume famously discusses the destabilizing, not to say deranging, force of radical questioning on human life. Like Heidegger, he seeks insight into the ground of causality or the "original and ultimate principle" of things. That search, however, leads to the abyss of "philosophical melancholy and delirium." Rarely has a thinker discussed in such harrowing detail the personal effects of radical questioning. Hume thinks that no honest account of human life can avoid confronting that crisis, which has multiple, rippling personal and political effects. Yet, also like Heidegger, Hume believes that radical questioning has its own grim dignity and greatness. For some few thinkers, the question of the ground of causation is the object of a natural inclination to inquire and is, even in the absence of final answers, the source of life's greatest pleasures. As one scholar has put it, Hume is one of those rare philosophers who makes the life of

[6] For a helpful description of modern and postmodern melancholy, see Robert Pippin, *Modernity as Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture*, 2nd edition (Malden: Blackwell, 1999). One need not accept Pippin's view that philosophical and political autonomy is both the source and solution for modern ills in order to profit from his account of modern discontents.

[7] For discussion, see J. Judd Owen, "The Task of Liberal Theory after September 11," *Perspectives on Politics* 2, #2 (June 2004): 325–30 and Roxanne Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). I am much in agreement with Euben's point that understanding thinkers like Qutb on their terms and as they understand themselves is essential.

philosophy itself questionable and problematic, a topic of investigation and argument rather than dogmatic acceptance or complacent certainty.[8]

At the same time, Hume is, just as famously and indeed in the very same texts, a crucial founder of what we have come to call commercial republicanism or classical liberalism.[9] Hume was one of the major thinkers in the eighteenth century to argue that the promotion of commerce and technological progress by means of the rule of law was the most important task of political society; that among the reasons commerce was good was that it produced a middle class that, wishing to be neither a master or a slave, was willing and able to stand up for free government; that free governments require a judicious mixture of executive strength and constitutional checks in the form of the separation of powers; and, perhaps most importantly, that individual freedom from arbitrary rule is the defining task of government and political society. Nor was Hume's political theory merely theoretical. Together with his contemporaries Montesquieu and Adam Smith, Hume was a major influence on the American founders and on the man most associated with the American Constitution, James Madison. Hume's influence on America is visible, for example, in Madison's famous argument for the extended republic in *Federalist* 10, but not only there.[10]

Hume is thus the greatest thinker to bear public witness to the pathos and dignity of radical questioning who was also a liberal, or the greatest liberal to

[8] See Donald Livingston, *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium: Hume's Pathology of Philosophy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 11–12. As will become clear, the present study is indebted to Livingston's work, especially the earlier *Hume's Philosophy of Common Life* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

[9] Appreciation of Hume's politics has grown considerably in recent years. See Knud Haakonssen, *The Science of a Legislator: The Natural Jurisprudence of David Hume and Adam Smith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy: From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, chapter 3; Frederick Whelan, *Order and Artifice in Hume's Political Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) and *Hume and Machiavelli: Political Realism and Liberal Thought* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004), esp. chapter 2; Neil McArthur, *Hume's Political Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), esp. chapter 6; and Andrew Sabl, *Hume's Politics: Coordination and Crisis in Hume's History of England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). Ralph Lerner provides perhaps the best description of the mindset of commercial republicanism in "Commerce and Character," in Ralph Lerner *The Thinking Revolutionary: Principle and Practice in the New Republic* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), 195–221. Paul Rahe provides an indispensable guide to commercial republicanism in its early modern origins, its revolt against ancient republicanism, and its influence on the American Founders in *Republics Ancient and Modern*, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

[10] For the classic discussion of Hume's influence on *Federalist* 10, see Douglass Adair, "'That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science': David Hume, James Madison, and the Tenth Federalist," in *Hume: A Re-evaluation*, ed. by Donald W. Livingston and James T. King (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976), 404–17; and Adair's *Fame and the Founding Fathers* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1996). For the most recent and extensive discussion of Hume's influence in America, including the controversies over Adair's thesis, see Mark Spencer, *David Hume and Eighteenth Century America* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), chapter 6.

discuss openly the problematic but unavoidable attraction of radical questioning. That is reason enough for us, as we ponder the linked fates of foundational questioning and liberal democracy, to tarry with him. There is, however, another reason for our interest in Hume, for he does not simply juxtapose our two issues, but claims that they are linked. Hume's moral and political philosophy, he enigmatically suggests, is a response to, and even extends and continues, his radical questioning. Hume presents his thought on this point in dramatic and autobiographical form: first he has a crisis of "philosophical melancholy and delirium" brought on by radical questioning; and then he turns, as a response to that crisis, to investigating morality and politics and a project of popular enlightenment. Crucially Hume does not regard his turn as an abandonment of radical questioning. All the questions that had earlier so troubled him return, this time apparently without threat of melancholy and delirium, and radical questioning (in its destructive form of superstition) becomes a key theme of his political science. What is truly striking is the claim Hume makes in order to explain his turn. He remarks in the introduction to the *Treatise* that there is no question of importance, including with regard to natural science, mathematics, or even natural theology, that can be decided without the science of man, by which he means his own moral and political philosophy. Hume's ambitions for his moral and political philosophy are, it seems, not merely practical but theoretical as well. Put differently, Hume claims that his science of human nature is not an abandonment of radical questioning but somehow the only adequate means of pursuing it.

This claim is a strange one, to say the least. Perhaps that is why many commentators simply fail to note it, to say nothing of giving a reasoned account of what it could mean. Yet Hume evidently thinks that his philosophic turn to morality and politics is the very core of his thought. Every book of the *Treatise* ends by affirming some version of the science of human nature adumbrated in the introduction. Moreover, Hume anticipates the centrality of his turn to the science of human nature in a cryptic allusion in the introduction to the *Treatise*. After boasting of the superiority of that science of human nature and its links to the science of nature proper advocated and practiced by Francis Bacon and other modern thinkers, he suggests that savvy readers may wonder why it should have taken so long after the advent of Bacon's modern science of nature for the science of man to have gotten off the ground. He answers that question with an analogy:

> 'Tis no astonishing reflection to consider, that the application of experimental philosophy to moral subjects shou'd come after that to natural at the distance of above a whole century; since we find in fact, that there was about the same interval betwixt the origins of these sciences; and that reckoning from THALES to SOCRATES, the space of time is nearly equal to that betwixt my LORD BACON and some late philosophers in England, who have begun to put the science of man on a new footing, and have engag'd the attention, and excited the curiosity of the public. (T Intro 7)

Hume alludes to a trope well known to the eighteenth century and stemming ultimately from Cicero, that Socrates was the first person to call philosophy down from the heavens, establish it in cities, introduce it into homes, and compel it to inquire into life and mores and good and evil things.[11] Just as Socrates forced ancient philosophy to take the human things seriously, Hume implies, "some late philosophers in England," including Hume himself, will compel modern philosophy to take life and mores and good and evil things seriously. Hume therefore suggests that he in a sense repeats the Socratic turn to morality and politics, and that turn is a turn in how philosophy understands itself. He suggests, that is, that his philosophy discovers its proper objects and the indispensable way of approaching all questions, only when it learns to take morality and politics seriously.

The present study asks: what could Hume have meant by this enigmatic claim? In what sense is Hume's moral and political philosophy a response to his crisis of radical questioning? And in what sense is that philosophy the indispensable basis for addressing foundational questions, as he asserts? This study does not aim to settle its motivating questions of philosophy and politics, if that goal is even possible. Its goals are far more modest: to understand how Hume approached and grappled with questions that are still very much with us. As befits an attempt to understand an alien thinker, the mode of the present study is primarily historical and interpretative. It takes as its guiding hypothesis the view that, in the case of a thinker like Hume, who is enormous subtle and complex and deals with issues that are not, to say the least, amenable to summary judgment, not everything worth saying has been said. And yet this study is by no means merely antiquarian in intention. So long as the issues of philosophy and politics continue to trouble liberal democracies, as they surely still do, it will continue to be helpful to us today to look to thinkers of the past for assistance in thinking through the substantive issues at hand. It may even be that we need such alien thinkers in order to think for ourselves about the issues that so vex us. Needless to say, it is not possible, nor is it in any way desirable, to treat such thinkers as authorities. But by giving us concrete examples of great thinkers wrestling with the fundamental questions, the great works give us the

[11] Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. by J.E. King (Cambridge, MA: Loeb, 1945), 435 (V.4.10-11). For examples of its use by authors on whom Hume modeled his work, see Joseph Addison, *Spectator* #10, March 12, 1711, available in *The Spectator*, ed. and with an introduction by Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 44 and Montaigne, *Complete Essays*, trans. by Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1943), 376–77, 402. For a helpful discussion of Montaigne's use of Socrates, see Alan Levine, *Sensual Philosophy: Toleration, Skepticism, and Montaigne's Politics of the Self* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2001), 78–79. Socrates' own turn to moral and political philosophy has recently become the subject of much interest: see Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1953) and *The City and Man* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Ronna Burger, *The Phaedo: A Platonic Labyrinth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); and Seth Benardete, *Socrates' Second Sailing: On Plato's Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

alien perspective we need in order to free ourselves from our own blinding prejudices. They provide us with a touchstone through which we may, if we allow ourselves, come to see our own situation with new eyes. If, then, the following study should appear merely interpretative, in accord with the imperative of understanding a thinker as he understands himself, it is only with the intention of fostering our own reflection on our own situation and the problems inseparable from it.

It must be admitted that the present study is somewhat novel, both in its framing of the key questions and in its orienting observations about the role moral and political philosophy play in Hume's thought. Few scholars have noted the significance of Hume's Socratic allusion, much less discussed its thematic importance for the argument of the *Treatise* as a whole.[12] It is only somewhat novel, however, since scholars have long recognized the puzzling relationship of Hume's "naturalism" to his "skepticism" as a fundamental crux for the interpretation of his thought.[13] The guiding question of the present study is, it should be evident, a close relative of this question. Yet the way I frame the question here is, I believe, superior to the more conventional way of approaching the issue in the literature. The naturalistic interpretation, which was the dominant interpretation of Hume for much of the past century, culminated in the view that Hume's philosophy was primarily an attempt to apply the methods of modern natural science to human beings. In an oft-repeated phrase, Hume wanted to be the "Newton of the moral sciences."[14] I believe this view is based on a mistaken understanding of what Hume meant by his "science of man." Hume tells us himself that the science of man cannot proceed in the same way as the science of nature. Rather than making experiments in the usual sense, it must "glean up" its insights "from a cautious observation of human life, and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behavior in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures" (T Intro 10). And when he finally describes his science of human nature at the end of Book I, he clearly has in mind inquiries into morality and politics. Taken together with Hume's allusion to Socrates, it is more accurate to say that Hume's model is Socrates rather than Newton.

[12] John Danford was the first scholar to notice and discuss the importance of Hume's Socratic allusion in print. See *David Hume and the Problem of Human Reason* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 33–34 together with chapter 1. See also Livingston, *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium*, 145–46.

[13] For the naturalist interpretation, see Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume: A Critical Study of Its Origins and Central Doctrines* (New York: Macmillan, 1960 [1941]) and Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), among many others. For the most prominent recent interpretation of Hume as a skeptic, see Robert Fogelin, *Skepticism in Hume's Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) and *Hume's Skeptical Crisis: A Textual Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[14] For the view that Hume sees himself as the "Newton of the moral sciences," see Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 3, 5.

This study also takes issue with the still common piece of conventional wisdom that Hume is an early and paradigmatic example of what contemporary philosophers call emotivism or relativism, the view that morality has no justification beyond irrational emotion.[15] For many, this interpretation was closely related to the view that Hume anticipated the fact/value distinction with his famous or infamous paragraph on the is/ought distinction. This latter view was always shaky: Hume mentions the is/ought distinction in only a single, ambiguous paragraph and does in fact offer normative advice left and right in ways hard to understand if he was committed to a thorough-going relativism. He clearly describes the moral sense as transcending mere individual interest; cheerfully tells us what the purpose and limits of government are; and says that the right of resistance to tyranny is both self-evident to human beings and inalienable. Only a twentieth century scholar, committed to some form of the fact/value distinction and looking for authorities in the tradition, could have read Hume as being a simple relativist. But here too I do not break entirely new ground. Several scholars in recent years have attempted to rehabilitate Hume as a moral theorist, even a moral realist.[16] Indeed, this line of interpretation is probably the single most prominent "school" of Hume interpretation today. As will become clear in the course of this study, I prefer to describe Hume as a political theorist who takes the question of morality seriously. However, there can be no doubt that the moral theorist interpretation articulates an important part of Hume's thought that the conventional wisdom overlooked.

Nor, finally, does the interpretation proposed in this study make a wholly new claim in noting that Hume makes a turn away from an early modern model of philosophy or science to something different and that this turn is crucial for understanding Hume's mature thought. Certainly, rarely has the significance of Hume's Socratic analogy for the structure of the *Treatise* as a whole been noticed. But almost all commentators have recognized the importance of Hume's turn at the end of Book I of the *Treatise*, and several recent commentators have emphasized the dramatic structure of the book as a whole. It is no longer possible to read Book I of the *Treatise* in isolation from the rest of the book, or to think

[15] For a work that gave prominence to the term "emotivism" with explicit reference to Hume, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

[16] See David Fate Norton, *David Hume: Skeptical Metaphysician, Common Sense Moralist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) and Rachel Cohon, *Hume's Morality: Feeling and Fabrication* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Sharon Krause and Michael Frazer have attempted to rehabilitate Hume's moral sentiment theory within political theory, albeit for purposes other than Hume's own. See Krause, *Civil Passions: Moral Sentiment and Democratic Deliberation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) and Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy: Justice and the Moral Sentiments in the Eighteenth Century and Today* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

that Hume's epistemology is simply separable from the rest of his thought. Indeed, the best recent interpretations have all been attempts to explain just what happens at the end of Book I.[17] In starting with Hume's Socratic analogy and using it to understand the pivotal and enigmatic moment at the end of Book I, then, I do not propose a wholly new Hume but offer a new interpretation of aspects of Hume's argument that have long been recognized without being adequately explained.

The fact that so many commentators have offered such diverse interpretations of Hume is evidence that there is something both compelling and elusive in Hume. On this front, matters are not helped by the fact that Hume had to downplay, disguise, or downright lie about his heterodox views about religion and politics, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Hume famously wrote to his friend Henry Home, who later became Lord Kames, while he was revising the *Treatise of Human Nature* to say that he had excised some reasoning concerning miracles. He went on to remark that he was, at the time of writing the letter, "castrating my work, that is, cutting off its noblest parts, that is, endeavouring it shall give as little offence as possible" before circulating to those whose opinions could make or break Hume's maiden work.[18] What was true in the late 1730s was true to varying degrees through Hume's life. In the years 1744–45 Hume's candidacy for a professorship at the university in Edinburgh was rejected because of charges of atheism and heterodoxy. In 1756 he was compelled to suppress two essays, one on suicide, the other on the immortality of the soul, when his publisher was threatened with prosecution. In 1756 the General Assembly in Edinburgh came close to excommunicating Hume and Kames alike. During his life Hume never

[17] See esp. Donald Livingston, *Hume's Philosophy of Common Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); and Annette Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991). Other works that provide helpful insights into this aspect of Hume's thought include: Nicholas Capaldi, "Hume as Social Scientist," *Review of Metaphysics*, 32, #1 (September 1978): 99–123; and Danford, *David Hume and the Problem of Reason*. Also worthy of attention in this regard is Thomas Prufer's compact and underappreciated classic, "A Reading of Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*," in *Recapitulations: Essays in Philosophy* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 43–47. Scott Yenor's articles helpful extend the analysis of Hume's "common life" found in Danford and Livingston: "Between Rationalism and Postmodernism: Hume's Political Science of 'Our Mixed Kind of Life,'" *Political Research Quarterly* 55, #2 (June 2002): 329–50 and "Revealed Religion and the Politics of Humanity in Hume's Philosophy of Common Life," *Polity* 38, #3 (2006): 395–415.

[18] See Hume's letter to Henry Home on December 2, 1737 in *Letters of David Hume*, ed. by J.Y.T. Greig, volume 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), 23–25. For other letters referring to the necessity of hiding one's views out of prudence, see the letter to Francis Hutcheson on March 16, 1740 and the letter to Gilbert Minto in March 1763, which discusses the *Dialogues*, in *Letters*, volume 1, 38–40, 379–80. For a clear defense of lying in public with regard to theological matters, see the letter to Colonel James Edmonstoune of April 1764 in *Letters*, volume 1, 439–40. The letter to William Strahan of January 25, 1772 discusses Hume's suppression of the essays on suicide and the immortality of the soul in 1755 "from my abundant Prudence": see *Letters of David Hume*, ed. by J.Y.T. Greig, volume 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), 252–54.