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ERIC SCHLIESSER

“I was lately reading the *Dialogues* of Lucian,” [Smith reported Hume to have said on his death-bed] “in which he represents one Ghost as pleading for a short delay till he should marry a young daughter, another till he should finish a house he had begun, a third till he had provided a portion for two or three young Children, I began to think of what Excuse I could alledge to Charon in order to procure a short delay, and as I have now done everything that I ever intended to do, I acknowledge that for some time, no tolerable one occurred; at last I thought I might say, Good Charon, I have been endeavouring to open the eyes of people; have a little patience only till I have the pleasure of seeing the churches shut up, and the Clergy sent about their business; but Charon would reply, O you loitering rogue; that won't happen these two hundred; do you fancy I will give you a lease for so long a time? Get into the boat this instant—Adam Smith to Alexander Wedderburn

I. Introduction

In this paper, I analyze Adam Smith's written response to David Hume's death, “Letter from Adam Smith, LL.D. to William Strahan, ESQ” (hereafter “Letter

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to Strahan”), published jointly with Hume’s brief autobiography, “My Own Life” (hereafter “Life”) in 1777.¹ I argue that these two publications shed light on what the purpose and rewards of doing philosophy in a commercial society are for Hume and Smith.

First, I sketch the contents of Hume’s “Life” and the context in which it appeared (part II). Hume’s autobiography shows that a philosopher can thrive in a commercial society. In parts III–IV, I provide a detailed reading of Smith’s “Letter to Strahan.” I argue that Smith’s account of Hume’s last days is designed as a subtle response to Hume’s self-portrait, and that it provides insight into Smith’s understanding of the aims of philosophy. While implicitly agreeing with the substance of Hume’s picture in Hume’s “Life,” Smith switches emphasis; he argues that philosophers can enjoy the rewards of friendship in this life and immortality after their death if they were benefactors to humanity. I argue that, for Smith, friendship among equals is the most valuable goal.

II. The Commercial Philosopher

This part is divided in three sections. I describe the circumstances of the publication of Hume’s “Life” and I call special attention to Smith’s involvement with its publication while he simultaneously attempted to distance himself from Hume’s *The Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (*Dialogues*). Second I describe the major points of Hume’s “Life.” In the final section, I discuss the important role that vanity plays in Hume’s narrative.

A. Historical Background

David Hume wrote a brief autobiography: “My Own Life.” It ends on April 18, 1776 about four months before his death on August 25. He intended to have it published as the opening essay in the projected posthumous republication of all of his works. Hume also wanted to publish works he had suppressed earlier in his career, including “Of Suicide,” “Of the Immortality of the Soul,” and, most famously, *Dialogues*.² Hume had requested that Adam Smith, his longtime close friend, arrange publication of the *Dialogues*, but Smith had been unwilling to do so. Even after Smith’s initial demurral, Hume wanted Smith to ensure the piece’s survival, leaving it to Smith’s discretion when to publish it (*Correspondence*, Letters No. 156 and 157, 194–6). Although Smith agreed to take care of the *Dialogues*, and thought the book was “finely written,” he confided to Strahan after Hume’s death that he was willing to communicate the manuscript “only to a few people. When you read [the *Dialogues*] you will see my reasons” (Letter No. 172, to Strahan, 211). Smith’s habitual prudence did not make this his finest hour.³ Hume was aware of

Smith's caution about being involved with publication of the *Dialogues*: "I have become sensible, that, both on account of the Nature of the Work, and of your Situation, it may be improper to hurry on that Publication" (Letter No. 157, from Hume, 196).⁴ Nevertheless, he assured Smith about the *Dialogues*, "that nothing can be more cautiously and artfully written" (Letter No. 165, from Hume, 205). Even so, after Hume's death, Smith was "still uneasy about the clamour which I foresee they will excite" (Letter No. 177A, unsent draft to Strahan, 216; see also, Letter No. 177B, 217). Eventually, Hume decided to leave the *Dialogues* to his nephew to ensure that it would be published after his death (Letter No. 168, from Hume, 208).

Despite Smith's qualms, publication of the *Dialogues* did not incite much public outcry. The same can not be said for the reaction to Smith's brief comments on Hume's death in "Letter to Strahan:" "A single, and as, I thought a very harmless Sheet of paper, which I happened to Write concerning the death of our late friend Mr Hume," Smith wrote to a Danish friend, "brought upon me ten times more abuse than the very violent attack I had made upon the whole commercial system of Great Britain" (to Andreas Holt, October 26, 1780).

While Smith did not want to be associated with the publication of Hume's *Dialogues*, he took a great deal of interest in Hume's "Life." On August 22, 1776, a few days before Hume's death, Smith wrote Hume requesting permission to "add a few lines to your account, in my own name, of your behavior in this illness, if, contrary to my hopes, it should provide your last. . . . You have in a declining state of health, under an exhausting disease, for more than two years together, now looked at the approach, or what you believed to be the approach of Death with a steady cheerfulness such as very few men have been able to maintain for a few hours, tho' otherwise in the most perfect Health" (Letter No. 166, 206; I omit Smith's description of a conversation with Hume about Hume's imaginary dialogue with Charon, which I will deal with below). In his last letter to Smith, Hume gave the requested permission (Letter No. 168, 208). Shortly after his death, Smith circulated a draft of his addition to Hume's "Life" to Hume's brother and others.⁵ Then made some minor changes (see his exchange of Letters No. 171, 175, and 176 with John Home of Ninewells, 210 and 214–15) and sent Strahan a finished draft before the end of the year (Letter No. 178, to Strahan, November 9, 1776, 217–21). In a copy of an unsent draft letter to Strahan (Correspondence, Letter No. 177B, 216), Smith claims that he had not started writing his comments on Hume's life until a few weeks after Hume's death. It is, nevertheless, clear that he started thinking about it before Hume's death. Smith explicitly intended his short piece to be published jointly with Hume's autobiography and, more importantly, as a publication separate from the *Dialogues*, although together with Hume's other works (Letter No. 172, to Strahan, 211). In two (probably unsent) draft cover letters to Strahan, Smith

talks of the “quiet” that his continuation of Hume’s “Life” may cause in his own mind (Letters No. 177A and 177B to Strahan, 216). Nevertheless, Smith was not trying only to relieve his stress over Hume’s death or his guilty conscience over his refusal to publish the *Dialogues*.⁶ In his letter to Hume, Smith makes clear that he intends to portray Hume’s behavior during his illness as an example of cheerfulness in the face of death. He wanted to present Hume as a model (cf. the epigraph from Lucan to frontispiece of Book III of Hume’s *Treatise*). As Smith remarked eleven days *before* Hume’s death in a letter to Alexander Wedderburn, “Poor David Hume is dying very fast, but with great cheerfulness and good humour and with more real resignation to the necessary course of things, than any Whining Christian ever dyed with pretended resignation to the will of God” (Letter No. 163, 203).⁷

Smith’s public discussion of Hume’s private conduct is especially surprising, because Smith is extremely guarded about keeping details of his own life from the public view, burning manuscripts on his deathbed.⁸ And when he writes Strahan to discourage him from publishing a collection of Hume’s Letters, he not only appeals to the contents of Hume’s will, but also claims that “Many things would be published not fit to see the light to the great mortification of all those who wish well to his memory” (Letter No. 18, 223–4). Some light is shed on Smith’s course of action by the fact that Smith undoubtedly knew, for example, about James Boswell’s visit to Hume on July 7, 1776.⁹ While Boswell’s *Life of Johnson* was published only in 1791, his *Account of Corsica* appeared in 1768. Although only one brief letter from Boswell to Smith is extant (Letter No. 122, 156), Boswell was well known to Smith, who was his college teacher at Glasgow in 1759–1760.¹⁰ Boswell’s diaries show that despite the antipathy between Johnson and Smith, Boswell met Smith in London on several occasions, even going out of his way to visit him.¹¹ Boswell was convinced that Smith was an “infidel.”¹² Because Smith knew of Boswell’s religiosity, Smith may have wanted to preempt a potentially unflattering account by Boswell of Hume’s attitude toward death.¹³ This is not entirely groundless: on the day of Hume’s burial, Boswell inspected the open grave, and was seen following the corpse to the grave.¹⁴ In the final lines of his “Life,” Hume boasts that “My friends never had occasion to vindicate any one circumstance of my character and conduct: not but that the zealots, we may well suppose, would have been glad to invent and propagate any story to my disadvantage, but they could never find any which they thought would wear the face of probability” (xlii).¹⁵ It is nevertheless striking that not only Smith, but also one of Hume’s other friends, John Home the playwright (e.g., *Douglas*), wrote an account of Hume’s dying days and both explicitly singled out his cheerful character.¹⁶

Smith's account of Hume's final days accords well, despite minor discrepancies with the other available evidence; this includes not only Hume's and Smith's correspondence (and that of their friends), but also memoirs written by Boswell and Home. In a separate letter to Strahan, Smith insists that his description of Hume's dying days is "very well authenticated" (*Correspondence*, Letter No. 172, 211). I treat "Letter to Strahan" less as a historical record, interesting as it is, and more as a literary effort to fix the public's "memory" of Hume as the model of a genuine philosopher in life and in the face of death. Smith ends his "Letter to Strahan" with the following characterization: "Upon the whole, I have always considered him, both in his lifetime and since his death, as approaching nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man, as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit" (xliv).¹⁷ Smith's "Letter to Strahan" occasionally echoes Plato's description of Socrates' death in the *Phaedo*, where Socrates expounds his account of the immortality of the soul.¹⁸ This connection is especially significant given that Hume's essay on that topic was about to appear and provides guidance to interpreting the Dialogues. And the details of Hume's death attracted widespread interest because he was thought to be an atheist by many who wanted to know how someone who does not believe in the afterlife faces death. This is illustrated by Boswell's account in which he maintains some ambiguity concerning the exact details of Hume's views on the existence and nature of God, but does report that Hume continued to deny an afterlife for his soul.¹⁹

B. Hume's "My Own Life"

At first glance, Hume's "history" of his writings includes little more than the publication dates and reports of the reception of most his works. Little is learned about their contents or how Hume understood the relationships among them.²⁰ Not only does he omit mention of several pamphlets, satires, and his involvement with the publications of the Edinburgh Philosophical Society's *Essays and Observations, Physical and Literary* (1754, 1756),²¹ but also in his "Life," Hume completely ignores what was among the most famous of his writings published during his life-time, that is, his record and narrative of his dealings with Rousseau and their very public falling out.²² I am not sure what to make of these oversights.²³ One of the main implicit goals of Hume's "Life," thus, appears to be his attempt to fix the canon of his writings, especially because he knew it would be the first piece encountered in definitive editions of his works.

While not providing much detail of the content of his works, in his "Life," Hume focuses on his material rewards for his literary output and related activities. After noting his "very slender fortune" at the start of his literary career in the 1730s, Hume provides many details of his ever-increasing material

prosperity, e.g., the “considerable accession to [his] small fortune” (xxxiv). The main explicit point, then, of “My Own Life” seems to be that a man of letters can maintain his “independency” while associating with the rich and powerful (xxxiv and xxxv); he was “not only independent, but opulent” (xxxviii). Hume achieved literary fame, his “ruling passion” (xl), and material success through “studious disposition . . . sobriety . . . industry” (xxxiii).²⁴ Even though Hume admits that he was from “a good family, both by father and mother,” and received a solid education, as the younger son, his “patrimony . . . was of course very slender;” most of his achievements are the product of his own effort (xxxii).²⁵

That is to say, Hume’s life serves as an example of how the values of commercial society, as defended in his own essays (especially “Of Commerce” and “Of Refinement in the Arts”), are fully compatible with and, in fact, enable a life of philosophy.²⁶ For Hume, economic, social, and intellectual commerce reinforce each other: “The spirit of the age affects all the arts. . . . The more these refined arts advance, the more sociable men become . . . They flock into cities; love to receive and communicate knowledge . . . *industry, knowledge, and humanity*, are linked together by an indissoluble chain” (“Of Refinement in the Arts,” 271; emphasis in original.) On the surface, at least, Hume’s “Life” is a vindication of his social project: the various kinds of commerce and exchange, including those of the sentiments, the foundation of his ethical thought, have a politically civilizing function.²⁷ A philosopher can remain independent while thriving, despite adversity (the great defender of commercial life turned out to be “totally unsuitable” for work with some “eminent” Bristol “merchants” (xxxiii)),²⁸ in the new cosmopolitan world of global trade in goods and ideas.

Hume’s insistence on “independence” does not mean he considered himself as self-sufficient.²⁹ Philosophic independence is achieved through skillful use of a “slender” family allowance (xxxii), commerce, and exchange of ideas by the constant application of the virtues of sobriety, frugality, and industry.³⁰ It lowers the dependence on obligations to patrons, as was common for earlier generations of men of letters. Self-sufficiency, by contrast, is to be identified with a withdrawal from a state of society—a “solitary and forlorn” condition (T 3.2.2.13; SBN 492). Hume’s “Life” glorifies perseverance in the face of adversity, not a retreat from the modern world (recall the famous passage in T 1.4.7.2; SBN 264). There is almost no sense in Hume’s autobiography that the rewards of doing philosophy are any different from those available in other occupations; philosophy appears to be just one part of the division of labor. Hume’s philosophizing takes place *within* society.³¹

There is, however, a minor hint toward the end of the “Life” that, for Hume, the best part of life is not exclusively focused on commerce of various kinds:

I now reckon upon speedy dissolution . . . and what is more strange, have, notwithstanding the great decline of my person, never suffered a moment's abatement of my spirits; insomuch, that were I to name the period of my life, which I should most choose to pass over again, I might be tempted to point to this later period. I possess the same ardour as ever in study, and the same gaiety in company. I consider, besides, that a man of sixty-five, by dying cuts off only a few years of infirmities; and though I see many symptoms of my literary reputation's breaking out at last with additional luster, I knew that I could have but few years to enjoy it. It is difficult to be more detached from life than I am at present. (lx)

Despite his passion for literary fame, and his strong affirmation of commercial society and a life of worldly activity, Hume would, if forced to choose the part of life he could live again, pick the period in which he is most "detached" from life, that is, in which he spends his time studying and socializing. It is the time of his life in which Hume can write about his character as if he were a dead man, that is, in the past tense "for that is the style I must now use in speaking of myself, which emboldens me the more to speak my sentiments" (xl). When one is detached from one's life, worldly reputation and financial rewards mean less than study and gay conversation with good companions. As a much younger man, Hume wrote,

One that has well digested his knowledge both of books and men, has little enjoyment but in the company of a few select companions. He feels too sensibly, how much all the rest of mankind fall short of the notions which he has entertained. And, his affection being thus confined within a narrow circle, no wonder he carries them further, than if they were more general and undistinguished. The gaiety and frolic of a bottle companion improves with him into solid friendship: And the ardours of a youthful appetite become an elegant passion. ("Delicacy of Taste," EMPL, 7-8)

The advocate of commercial life is, thus, a passionate elitist. (See also Hume's entertaining letter No. 31 to Smith, *Correspondence*, 33-6.)³²

But one ought not dramatize Hume's choice; he is not rejecting the rewards of commercial life and worldly fame outright as unworthy of pursuit.³³ His phrasing, "I might be tempted," is extremely weak. The temptation of turning one's back on the world is itself only made *possible* by two important conditions: the achievement of worldly success (in the service of changing the world) in legal security; a sense and awareness of the impending dissolution of

his body. Commercial life, then, is not just compatible with the philosophic life, but, by enabling the conditions that allow for independence and the genuine possibility of being tempted by the detached view on life, also a means to it.³⁴

C. Hume's Vanity

The opening lines announce the ostensible aim of Hume's "Life:"

It is difficult for a man to speak long of himself without vanity; therefore, I shall be short. It may be thought an instance of vanity that I pretend at all to write of my life; but this Narrative shall contain little more than the History of my Writings; as, indeed, almost all my life has been spent in literary pursuits and occupations. The first success of most of my writings was not such as to be an object of vanity. (xxxix)

Hume starts his "Life" by repeatedly raising the specter of vanity; he mentions it twice more in the first paragraph. In the closing line, he returns to it: "I cannot say there is no vanity in making this funeral oration of myself, but I hope it is not a misplaced one; and this is a matter of fact which is easily cleared and ascertained" (xli). Hume does not deny the possibility that he is a vain man; all he hopes is that his vanity is not misplaced. From his earliest writings, Hume tried to combat the bad reputation of vanity: "Vanity is rather to be esteemed a social passion, and a bond of union among men" (T 3.2.2.12; SBN 491).³⁵ In the closing paragraph of his essay, "Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature," in the context of an attack on Hobbes and Mandeville, who had claimed that selfishness is the sole animating principle of humankind, Hume gives a powerful defense of the positive instrumental role of vanity:

[I]t has always been found, that the virtuous are far from indifferent to praise; and therefore they had been represented as a set of vain-glorious men, who had nothing in view but the applauses of others. But this . . . is a fallacy. . . . The case is not the same with vanity as with the other passions . . . vanity is so closely allied to virtue, and to love of 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; and it is almost impossible to have the latter without some degree of the former. Accordingly, we find, that this passion for glory is always warped and varied according to the particular taste or disposition of the mind on which it falls. . . . To love the glory of the virtuous deeds is a sure proof of the love of virtue. (EMPL, 86)

For Hume, *some* vanity can be extremely useful in promoting virtue. Whether or not one agrees with Hume's defense of vanity that motivates the performance and revels in the glory of virtuous deeds, in the closing lines of his "Life," Hume claims that, if he is vain, it is the right kind of vanity. He invites readers to judge whether or not the vanity evident in his eulogy is misplaced. What Hume cannot do within the norms of propriety, even in the vain context of imagining his own funeral oration, is supply evidence of his virtuous deeds.

I read Hume as affirming that he is vain and that the only point of contention is for his readers to decide whether or not his vanity is appropriate. One could argue that in the "Life" Hume never claims to be vain; he even says that the brevity of the "Life" is designed to avoid speaking in a vain way. But he is equally explicit in being unable to deny that he is vain ("I cannot say there is no vanity") in telling the story of his own life. And his admission of vanity is implicitly suggested in the remark at the start of his essay that the lack of success of his earliest writings could not be the "object of vanity," that is to say, that the tremendous success of his later writings *would* be objects of vanity. So, given that he repeatedly raises the issue of vanity, I conclude that Hume thinks himself vain. The issue is, as he says, whether or not it is misplaced.

Hume insists that, whether or not his vanity is proper for him, it is a matter of fact; it is not just any matter of fact, but one that "is easily cleared and ascertained." Because the worth of his vanity is, by his lights, a question that may have a definitive answer, the question is: who will supply it? It would have to be someone that knows the relevant facts of Hume's life and is a good judge of character. In "Of The Delicacy of Taste and Passion," Hume explains it is delicacy of taste, "which enables us to judge of the characters of men, of compositions of genius and the productions of the nobler arts," that is, the arts and sciences (6). What is required, then, is that "rare" someone with delicacy of taste ("Of the Standard of Taste," 241, 243; cf. "Of the Study of History," 567–8, and "A Character of Sir Robert Walpole"), who can settle the question in an authoritative fashion. Adam Smith, whose TMS contains as subtitle in some editions "An essay toward an analysis of the principles by which men naturally judge concerning the conduct and character, first of their neighbours, and afterwards of themselves," takes up the challenge in the "Letter to Strahan"; he does so in a very artful way.

III. Smith's "Letter to Strahan"

In this part, I construe Smith's "Letter to Strahan" as an implicit defense of the appropriateness of Hume's vanity from a Humean point of view. I investigate two lines of defense of Hume's vanity that can be unearthed in Smith's "Letter

to Strahan.” I first consider to what degree Hume’s private acts of charity suffice as a defense. But my main focus is on an interpretation of Smith’s report of Hume’s imaginary dialogue with Charon. This provides insight into Hume’s public acts of generosity.

In what follows, I take for granted the two obvious messages of Smith’s piece when read on its own: Hume faced death in a cheerful manner³⁶ and his character was very balanced. My approach should not be understood as a denial of the presence or importance of these two issues; these are both crucial in Smith’s attempt to fix the posthumous memory of his friend in a Christian world.

A. Smith on Hume’s charity

Is Hume’s vanity appropriate? Smith never explicitly touches upon the topic in “Letter to Strahan.” And, perhaps, this was not his highest priority. Because the word “vanity” is never mentioned in the “Letter to Strahan,” one may be inclined to think that this issue was of no concern to him. I cannot prove that this view is mistaken. What I offer is a reconstruction that makes sense of the details of his “Letter to Strahan” in light of Hume’s and Smith’s other works in the biographical and historical context sketched above.³⁷ Moreover, there is an obvious reason why Smith does not attempt to vindicate directly the appropriateness of Hume’s vanity; in the society he inhabited, “The words *vain* and *vanity* are never taken in a good sense” (*The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (TMS, VI.iii.43, 258). As I argue below (section IV.A), I read this as a claim about language. Smith could not have been ignorant of Hume’s attempts to give vanity a favorable connotation; Smith’s statement is true only if seen as an empirical description of common sense in eighteenth century Christian moral language. Moreover, he thinks that Mandeville exploits this feature (TMS VII.22.4.11, 312). Because Smith’s general strategy is to work, when possible, from within the language of common morality,³⁸ it would be strange if he had explicitly defended Hume’s vanity in the “Letter to Strahan.” But, to let discerning readers judge whether or not Hume’s vanity is appropriate, given the context of Hume’s philosophy, all he needs to provide is evidence of Hume’s virtuous acts—even if, in the final analysis, Smith either from prudential considerations cannot or, from substantial philosophic differences, does not want to endorse publicly this element of Hume’s philosophy. In his “Letter to Strahan,” Smith mentions Hume’s private and public generosity. I now examine both kinds of evidence that Smith provides.

In the “Letter to Strahan,” Smith writes that “concerning [Hume’s] philosophic opinions men will, no doubt judge variously, every one approving, or condemning them, according as they happen to coincide or disagree with

his own" (xlvi). Smith seems to be admitting that there is no matter of fact that will settle one's views of Hume's philosophy.³⁹ The same is not the case "concerning [Hume's] character and conduct" about which "there can scarce be a difference of opinion." Smith says:

His temper, indeed, seemed more happily balanced, if I may be allowed such an expression, than that perhaps of any other man I have ever known. Even in the lowest state of his fortune, his great and necessary frugality never hindered him from exercising, upon proper occasions, acts both of charity and generosity. It was a frugality founded, not upon avarice, but the love of independency. (xlvi)

The main point of this passage is Hume's balanced temper. But Smith also calls attention to the fact that Hume was not always rich. Not surprisingly for the man who encourages frugality (*Wealth of Nations* (WN) II.iii.28, 341;⁴⁰ cf. TMS, V.ii.13, 209), Smith attributes it to Hume, as Hume explicitly does in his "Life" (xxxiv–xxxv; see also Hume's EPM, 6.1.21; SBN 237). Smith defends Hume's frugality as a virtue not from a Christian point of view, but because it is motivated by his laudable love of independency. By stressing Hume's love of independence, Smith subtly shifts the emphasis away from fame, Hume's self-described "ruling passion." But Smith also insists that Hume was, at times, a generous and charitable person. In "Letter to Strahan," Smith does not offer examples of Hume's charity. It is quite possible that Smith remembered some particular acts of generosity by Hume toward him or others; he claims that, even when Hume was poor, he helped others.⁴¹

I doubt that a defense of the appropriateness of Hume's vanity turns on his private acts of generosity. His "Life" is a literary autobiography because, according to Hume, "almost all my life has been spent in literary pursuits and occupations." This is what he wants us to remember. A *genuinely* Humean defense of the propriety of Hume's vanity must turn on a proper assessment of his career in writing, that is, his *public* acts of generosity.

B. Hume's exchange with Charon

In the letter to Hume in which Smith requests permission to add a few lines to his "Life," Smith is particularly eager to be allowed to report on a conversation about an imaginary exchange between Hume and Charon (Correspondence, Letter No. 166, 206). Smith describes this exchange first in the letter to Alexander Wedderburn, in the context of contrasting Hume to the "Whining Christians," quoted at the top of this paper.⁴² The version presented in the "Letter to Strahan" is the most detailed:

[W]hen [Hume] was reading a few days before, Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, among all the excuses which are alleged to Charon [that is, the ferryman who conveyed the dead to Hades] for not entering readily into his boat, he could not find one that fitted him; he had no house to finish, he had no daughter to provide for, he had no enemies upon whom he wished to revenge himself. "I could not well imagine," said he, "what excuse I could make to Charon in order to obtain a little delay. I have done every thing of consequence which I ever meant to do, and I could at no time expect to leave my relations and friends in a better situation than that in which I am now likely to leave them; I, therefore, have all reason to die contented." He then diverted himself with inventing several jocular excuses, which he supposed he might make to Charon, and with imagining the very surly answers which it might suit the character of Charon to return to them. "Upon further consideration," said he, "I thought I may say to him, Good Charon, I have been correcting my works for a new edition. Allow me a little time, that I may see how the Public receives the alterations." But Charon would answer, "When you have seen the effect of these, you will be for making other alterations. There will be no end of such excuses; so, honest friend, please step into the boat." But I might still urge, "Have a little patience, Good Charon, I have been endeavouring to open the eyes of the Public. If I live a few years longer, I may have the satisfaction of seeing the downfall of some of the prevailing systems of superstition." But Charon would then lose all temper and decency. "You loitering rogue, that will not happen these many hundred years. Do you fancy I will grant you a lease for so long a term? Get into the boat this instant, you lazy loitering rogue." (xlv-xlvi)

Smith includes the exchange to illustrate that Hume "approached dissolution" with "great cheerfulness" (xlvi).⁴³ There is no mention of Hume's stance towards a Christian doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Hume is shown to have tranquility of mind and "magnanimity" without making "any parade" of it (xlvi); in Letter No. 166 to Hume, Smith refers to the "steady cheerfulness" of Hume (*Correspondence*, 206). For Smith, this kind of magnanimity is a great achievement because death "is the king of terrors" (TMS VI.iii.6, 239). According to Smith "War is the great school both for acquiring and exercising this species of magnanimity" (TMS VI.iii.6, 239). "No character is more admired," Smith wrote, "than that of the man who faces death with intrepidity, and maintains his tranquility and presence of mind"

(VI.iii.17, 244). While Hume was no stranger to war, Smith's account is hard to believe. Dr. Johnson, for example, has no doubt that Hume "lied" about facing death calmly. Johnson thinks Hume "had a vanity in being thought easy."⁴⁴ Smith implicitly insists that Hume's vanity is not misplaced.⁴⁵

It is extremely important that Hume is portrayed as reading the ancient pagan satirist Lucian and not, say, the Bible or some pious work. Hume and Smith have a high opinion of Lucian.⁴⁶ Lucian was "though licentious with regard to pleasure," in Hume's opinion, "yet, in other respects, a very moral writer" (EPM 6.1.21; SBN 242). It is clear from the context of these remarks that Hume thinks that Lucian is "a very moral writer" because of his public spirit. Elsewhere Hume praises Lucian for performing the "good office" of entirely opening the "eyes of mankind" by exposing the false prophet Alexander of Paphlagonia (EHU 10.2.23; SBN 120–1).⁴⁷ For Hume, Lucian is a kindred spirit in combating superstition—not the least because Lucian has no illusions about human nature.⁴⁸

One might argue that Hume's imaginary exchange with Charon does not prove that Hume's vanity is justified. Instead, it shows Hume at his most selfish. After all, Hume is pleading with Charon to be allowed to live longer so he can experience the downfall of superstition with "satisfaction;" Hume wants merely to increase his own pleasure. But his discussion of vanity in "Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature," says that, "The case is not the same with vanity as with the other passions . . . vanity is so closely allied to virtue, and 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; and it is almost impossible to have the latter without some degree of the former." Just because Hume gets some satisfaction from witnessing the effects of his deeds is not enough to judge them lacking in virtue. His desire of fame for laudable actions and the pleasures these bring is an instance of the love of virtue. As he writes in EPM, "A desire of fame, reputation, or character with others, is so far from being blameable, that it seems inseparable from virtue, genius, capacity, and a generous or noble disposition" (8.11; SBN 265; see also Hume's discussion in section 9.1.10; SBN 276: "love of fame . . . rules, with such uncontrolled authority, in all generous minds").⁴⁹ Recall that Hume's remarks in "Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature" are made in the context of criticizing the systems of Hobbes and Mandeville. Both of them are guilty in the eyes of Hume and Smith of reducing the complexity of our moral lives to a single dominant principle: self-love (see, e.g., Hume's EPM 9.1.5; SBN 271 and "Appendix 2;" TMS VII.iii.1–9, 315–21).⁵⁰ Moreover, Smith is quite adamant, while discussing Mandeville's work, that "self-love may frequently be

a virtuous motive of action (TMS VII.ii.4.8, 309). For Hume and Smith, it is a mistake to think that virtue is incompatible with self-love and, following Aristotle, that it can never be pleasurable.

It is important for my argument—that within Hume’s philosophy, Hume’s vanity is justified because of the virtuous nature of Hume’s actions—that Hume wants to live longer because, through his books, he has “been endeavouring to open the eyes of the Public.” In his “Letter to Strahan,” Smith shows that when in Hume’s “Life,” Hume writes that “almost all my life has been spent in literary pursuits and occupations,” these pursuits are part of an *Enlightenment* project against superstition and ignorance in aid of the Public.⁵¹ For Hume, “no qualities are more entitled to the general good-will and approbation of mankind, than beneficence and humanity, friendship and gratitude, natural affection and public spirit, or whatever proceeds from a tender sympathy with others, and a generous concern for our kind and species” (EPM 2.1.5; SBN 178). Hume’s life of letters, devoted to public enlightenment in attacking religious superstition, in the footsteps of Lucian, is a form of public service. By reporting the imaginary exchange with Charon, Smith shows us Hume’s benevolence and a generous concern for mankind. In the context of Hume’s very human desire to live longer and with his imaginative abilities on display (he is creating a dialogue with a character from Lucian),⁵² the serious joke works because Hume’s vanity is shown to be an instance of public spirit. Hume’s advocacy of public enlightenment against superstition and the values of commercial life, of which he benefited materially, have their source not only in Hume’s pleasure, but also in his love of virtue or of humanity.⁵³ For Hume, the presence of self-interest is no reason to reject the virtues displayed. Smith also does not insist on absolute purity of motives, as he believes Mandeville and Rousseau in different ways mistakenly attempt to do to recognize virtuous actions (TMS VII.2.4.12, 312, and Smith’s “Letter to Edinburgh Review,” ¶12, 251, reprinted in EPS).⁵⁴ Hume’s writings are a form of public generosity in the battle against superstitions.⁵⁵ Hence, Hume’s vanity is justified.⁵⁶

The exchange with Charon makes clear, however, that Hume was aware that attack on “the prevailing systems of superstition” is not guaranteed success. In Smith’s narrative, Hume is presented as realizing that *many* centuries will pass before we can expect to see only “some” of the systems of superstition defeated; this suggests that at the end of his life, Hume was a pessimistic Enlightenment thinker. An implication of Smith’s report is that the reception of Hume’s works had taught him the limited impact of his words on most people’s beliefs (cf. TMS 3.5.10, 168). So, while Hume’s life and character show how a philosophic life can be lived in a commercial society, it also shows that

most people will resist living a life without superstition.⁵⁷ Yet, both Smith's "Letter to Strahan" (xliv–xlvii) and Hume's "Life" (xxxiii, xl) show the different positive effects on Hume's state of mind of reading other thinkers' works. Enlightenment can occur in a limited fashion.

It might be argued that I make too much of Smith's report of Hume's imaginary exchange with Charon; all this "jocular" conversation really is meant to show is that Hume faced death with "great cheerfulness" (xlvi). This is, as I asserted above, one of the main points of Smith's piece. It would be a mistake to focus exclusively on the relevance of Hume's unorthodox religious beliefs, e.g., his denial of the existence of an after-life. This would be to underestimate the importance of the portrait of Hume reading Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*. This anecdote does not show that he *merely* "diverted himself." Smith shows that part of Hume's wisdom consists in his ability to entertain himself with "amusements" (xliv; see also Hume's "gaiety in company" (xl)) and serious topics (see Hume's "ardour . . . in study" (xl))—sometimes these are the same, of course (for a nice example, see Hume's letter No. 31, *Correspondence*, 33–6, occasioned by the reception of TMS). In Smith's portrayal, Hume follows Plato's suggestion for old men to combine play with high-minded seriousness (*Laws* 685AB; *Menexenus* 236C; also *Laws* 803BE).⁵⁸

In the "Life" Hume calls his autobiography a "funeral oration" (xli). This mock-seriousness recalls Plato's *Menexenus*—another dialogue between the dead.

IV. Wisdom and Happiness

In the previous parts, I consider Smith's judgment of Hume's "Life" from the point of view of Hume's philosophy. In this final part, I investigate what Smith considers to be the rewards of doing philosophy. Hume's "Life" suggests that these rewards are largely material. While Smith does not deny this, he emphasizes, instead, the possibility of posthumous fame and the pleasures of a genuine friendship in this life. Smith shifts from Hume's focus on vanity to Hume's friendships. In the first section, I detail Smith's ambiguous understanding of vanity. In the second, I discuss the role of posthumous fame in rewarding philosophic activity. In the final two sections, I discuss the importance of friendship in commercial and philosophic life.

A. Smith on Vanity

Smith is less willing than Hume to defend vanity. In fact, a *casual* reading of TMS may leave the impression that Smith is an enemy of vanity: "The words *vain* and *vanity* are never taken in a good sense" (TMS VI.iii.43, 258; emphasis

in original). Vanity's "meaning" involves a "considerable degree of blame" (VI.iii.33, 255). Elsewhere he writes: "To be pleased with . . . groundless applause is a proof of the most superficial levity and weakness. It is what is properly called vanity, and it is the foundation of the most ridiculous and contemptible vices, the vices of affectation and common lying; follies which, if experience did not teach us how common they are, one should imagine the least spark of common sense would save us from" (TMS III.2.4, 115). In none of these passages, however, does Smith claim that being vain, as opposed to being called or thought to be vain, is always a bad thing. He knows that vanity can lead to the most contemptible vices, but he does not say it always does. In fact, he claims that, if common sense were more common, then more people would be able to prevent their vanity from being the foundation of various vices. The widespread lack of common sense, not vanity, is the problem.⁵⁹ Smith's willingness to admit that common sense is not so common and that many people do not act as rational creatures has ramifications for understanding his moral theory and epistemology that cannot be pursued here.

Smith says that vanity, properly defined, is caused by "so gross an illusion of the imagination, that it is difficult to conceive how any rational creature should be imposed upon it." Yet, vanity is widespread and often prevents us, and our impartial spectators within, from seeing ourselves in the proper light (TMS III.2.4–5, 115–16). For Smith, "Vanity is very frequently no more than an attempt prematurely to usurp that glory before it is due" (TMS VI.iii.46, 259). It is, however, only "very frequently" so, and not always. In TMS, Smith also claims that

[t]he desire of doing what is honourable and noble, of rendering ourselves the proper objects of esteem and approbation, cannot with any propriety be called vanity. Even the love of well-grounded fame and reputation, the desire of acquiring esteem by what is really estimable, does not deserve that name. (VII.ii.4.8, 209)

These lines are problematic for my argument that Smith's "Letter to Strahan" is an attempt to justify the appropriateness of Hume's *vanity*. For even if Smith holds that Hume wants the right kind of desire for fame, one motivated by acquiring esteem for doing really estimable things, Smith clearly does not want to call this vanity. Smith's wording is extremely careful. He does not deny that vanity plays a role here. All he is committed to is that virtuous motives do not "deserve" to be called vain because he is aware that vanity is never taken in a good sense. *Propriety* demands that we refrain from using the word "vanity" when describing virtuous motives. Smith has a powerful reason for

his restraint. According to Smith, Mandeville almost succeeded in denying the reality of the virtues by exploiting an ambiguity of *common* language, combined with “popular ascetic doctrines,” to label all virtuous actions as vain (TMS VII.ii.4.11–12, 311–13).⁶⁰ None of this means that someone who acts from the desire of doing what is honorable in order to be esteemed cannot be vain for justified reasons. For Smith, one cannot in good conscience *say* of somebody that he is vain in a good way but that one can *show* it. Smith never says this outright, but my reading accounts for Smith’s wording. And Smith does see positive elements in vanity.

While vanity is often a “vice” in individuals (TMS VI.iii.33–47, 255–9), Smith thinks it more “foolish” (TMS VI.iii.37, 256) than pernicious: “The worst falsehoods of vanity are all what we call white lies” (TMS VI.iii.41, 257); Smith is explicitly distinguishing vanity from pride here. For Smith, “vanity” is in some people connected “with many amiable [virtues]; with humanity, with politeness, with a desire to oblige in all little matters, and sometimes with a real generosity” (TMS VI.iii.42, 258). So, for Smith, vanity can have negative *and* positive effects on people’s behavior.

Moreover, vanity can be a crucial, potentially *beneficial* sentiment for society; in his theorizing, it is one of the linchpins on which all social and economic commerce thrives (TMS I.iii.2.1, 50).⁶¹ Vanity is “natural” in us (TMS VI.iii.47, 259), and it has a proper use: “The great secret of education is to direct vanity to proper objects . . . do not discourage [the student’s] pretensions to those [accomplishments] that are of real importance.” Vanity can be cultivated into a force for positive change; the right kind of vanity, “the real love of true glory,” can make people want to be virtuous (TMS VI.iii.46, 259; cf. VII.ii.4.8–10, 309–11; III.2.8, 177).

The point of Smith’s attempt to vindicate Hume’s character is not merely to present Hume as an advocate of commercial life, but more emphatically to present his life as a model of how a Man of Letters can thrive in commercial society.⁶² For Smith, philosophy, “like every other employment,” is just one form the division of labor can take (WN I.i.9, 21): there is no principled difference between “a philosopher and a common street porter;” all differences are largely effects of the division of labor.⁶³ Only a philosopher’s “vanity” can cause him to be unwilling to acknowledge “scarce any resemblance” (WN I.ii.4, 28–9). In Smith’s scheme, “philosophers or men of speculation,” have an assigned role; their trade “is not to do anything, but to observe everything; and who, upon that account, are often capable of combining together the powers of the most distant and dissimilar objects” (WN I.1.9, 21).⁶⁴ Hume’s success, based on the commercial values of perseverance, hard work, and frugality, proves that the philosophic life need not be incompatible with success

in commercial society. By raising the topic of his own vanity, Hume makes the rhetorical strategy of justifying commercial society more difficult for Smith. Hume's vanity is a form of self-incrimination in a devout Christian world.⁶⁵ Smith is constrained by the fact that "vanity" has such a bad connotation in English, which is why he uses the term, "real love of true glory" in TMS. In the "Letter to Strahan," Smith avoids the issue by shifting the focus to Hume's magnanimity and friendships. For Smith, being called "magnanimous," which involves a "considerable degree of praise and admiration," is to be distinguished from being called vain—even when "we" observe excessive self-estimation—as long as we "observe a great and distinguished superiority above the common level of mankind" (TMS VI.iii.33, 255).

B. Posthumous Rewards

Smith agrees with Hume about fame: "The love of just fame, of true glory, even for its own sake, and independent of any advantage which he can derive from it, is not unworthy even of a wise man" (TMS III.2.8, 117; see also III.2.29, 127). But what if no fame is forthcoming? What are the genuine rewards, for the philosopher, of a commitment to opening up the eyes of the public, especially if this is a very futile enterprise? (So many centuries have passed since Lucian's time!) Moreover, although Hume's "Life" ultimately is a triumphant account of increasing material rewards and public recognition, there is no sense of inevitability. As Dugald Stewart, commenting on the fate of Smith's works, observes: "It is not often that a disinterested zeal for truth has so soon met with its just reward" ("Account of Smith," EPS, §IV, ¶29, 323). In WN, Smith remarks that "Before the invention of the art of printing, a scholar and a beggar seem to have been terms very nearly synonymous" (I.x.c.38, 149). Even after the invention of the printing press, Hume's experience was quite unusual: "The copy-money given me by the booksellers," Hume bragged, "much exceeded any thing formerly known in England" (xxxviii). Few Men of Letters could claim to be "independent" let alone "opulent" from their writing.⁶⁶ Surely Hume's singular achievement does not warrant generalization. If anything, all it shows is that Hume is a winner of what Smith calls an imperfect "lottery" (WN I.x.b.22, 123 and I.x.c.37, 148). What kind of rewards could motivate someone who desires independence in commercial society to choose the uncertain path of a career in letters? According to Smith's economic theorizing, people overestimate their own luck and future pay-offs when making decisions (e.g., WN I.x.b.26, 124 ff). Aspiring philosophers may be just as deluded as other people. For Smith, some philosophers contribute to the division of labor by putting their "ingenuity" to work and produce useful inventions or machines (WN I.i.9, 21). But there is no promise they will receive much in reward for

this. In fact, according to Smith the scant rewards available to teachers and educators of mankind is, by making education affordable, “surely an advantage” to the “publick” at large (I.x.c.40, 151). It would be ironic if a philosopher’s public service would derive from self-deception about available rewards (cf. TMS IV.1.9–10, 183–5).

When Smith turns to the question of what motivates somebody to become a philosopher, nowhere does he discuss monetary incentives or possible technological applications at all.⁶⁷ In fact, he explicitly denies that the origin of philosophy should be seen in a Baconian desire to create a useful application. For Smith, philosophers get drawn into talking about the utility of their enterprise only in defense of the reproach from people that do not understand their interest in “sublime discoveries” (TMS IV.2.7, 189). Instead, he agrees with Plato that some people are gripped by the sensation of wonder when they confront the world of appearances (“The History of Astronomy,” II¶4, 39–40, II¶12, EPS, 45–6; cf. Hume’s *Treatise*, 2.3.10.12; SBN 452–3.) By trying to create a coherent picture of the world they attempt to alleviate this painful sentiment of wonder (e.g., “History of Astronomy,” II¶9, 42–3 of EPS; cf. WN V.if.24–6, 767–70). This desire for tranquility of mind, and not material gain or public spirit, originally motivates intellectual inquiry! Smith assures us that some philosophers, especially mathematicians with robust and attainable criteria of success, can attain it (TMS III.2.20, 124; cf. VI.i.11–13, 215–16 and WN IV.iii.c.9, 493). Nevertheless, this response is not very satisfying if one thinks that philosophers need some rewards to keep them going.⁶⁸

The last paragraph of Smith’s “Letter to Strahan” begins as follows: “Thus died our most excellent, and never to be forgotten friend; concerning whose philosophical opinions men will, no doubt judge variously” (xlviii). Consider the phrase, “never to be forgotten.” He uses it also in a letter in remembrance of his old teacher, Francis Hutcheson (*Correspondence*, Letter No. 274, 309). As Smith writes in TMS: “Men of letters, though, after their death, they are frequently more talked of than the greatest princes or statesmen of their times, are generally, during their life, so obscure and insignificant that their adventures are seldom recorded by contemporary historians” (VII.ii.1.31, 285; cf. WN I.x.c.39, 149–50).

In TMS, Smith draws a distinction between the qualities of generosity and humanity. For Smith, the virtue of humanity consists of “exquisite fellow-feeling,” while the virtue of generosity consists of acts that include self-denial, self-command, sacrifice, and, often, public spirit. For Smith, the generosity of public spirit often involves magnanimity (TMS IV.2.10–11, 190–2).⁶⁹ Magnanimity is one of the most impressive virtues for Smith:

“magnanimity amidst great distress appears always so divinely grateful” (TMS I.iii.13, 47); one of Smith’s examples is Socrates’ death-scene in which Smith imagines that Socrates can imagine posthumous approval for his disposition of “heroic magnanimity!” Given Smith’s repeated emphasis on Hume’s gaiety and cheerfulness in the face of death, it is noteworthy that, in TMS, Smith calls special attention to Socrates’ “triumphant gaiety” and the “gayest and most cheerful tranquility.” Smith does not attribute Socrates’ “noble and generous effort” to Socrates’ belief in, say, the immortality of the soul; Smith insists, rather, that Socrates turns his eyes away “from what is either naturally terrible or disagreeable in his situation” (TMS I.iii.1.14, 48–9; Hume also calls Socrates “magnanimous,” but for reasons different from Smith’s, see EPM 7.17; SBN 256).⁷⁰ It is, therefore, important, that in his “Letter to Strahan,” Smith attributes, besides generosity, also “magnanimity” to Hume on several occasions (xlv–xlvi).⁷¹ Smith believes that if the public knew the magnanimous man better, “they would esteem and love him.” Smith argues that “there is an affinity . . . between the love of virtue and the love of true glory.” The magnanimous man may despise existing public opinion, but “he has the highest value for those [views] which ought to be entertained of him” (TMS VII.ii.4.10, 310–11). The reward, such as it is, for a philosopher does not generally come in this life, but in fame after death. As Dugald Stewart writes in his “Account of Smith:” “Philosophers (to use an expression of Lord Bacon’s) are the ‘servants of posterity’; and most of those who have devoted their talents to the best interests of mankind, have been obliged, like Bacon, to ‘bequeath their fame’ to a race yet unborn, and to console themselves with the idea of sowing what another generation was to reap” (IV¶29, 323 in EPS).

There is ample evidence that Hume cared deeply about the opinions of his posthumous public concerning his character and ideas; Smith points out that until the very end Hume kept “correcting his own works for a new edition” (xlv). Hume’s jocular exchange with Charon implies that the reaction of the public influenced those “alterations” (xlvi). The fact that he composed his “Life” to be prefixed to the new edition suggests he wants the memory of *who* he was to be conjoined to the memory of canonical part of *what* he produced. In reporting the exchange with Charon, Smith shows Hume’s concern about the impact of his works; Hume’s detachment from life does not mean he does not care about his effect on the world. Even when being tempted by detachment, Hume would like to imagine that he is remembered as a benefactor.

Smith’s “Letter to Strahan” is, thus, an attempt to secure the appropriate basis for Hume’s posthumous “memory”⁷²—one that is neither based on the potential notoriety of the posthumous Dialogues and the accompanying essays on suicide and the immortality of the soul, nor on the extent, if any, of

Hume's vanity. Rather, it shows how Hume "submitted [to the inevitability of death] with the utmost cheerfulness, and the most perfect complacency and resignation" (xliv). Note, however, that in Smith's account of Hume's death there is no talk of divine providence or the immortality of our souls, or about the consolation reflection on either can provide. Hume's apparent tranquility of mind and cheerfulness is a magnanimous act by a man who had achieved independence while being generous to the public.

C. Friendship, Sincerity, and Real Happiness

Destroy love and friendship; what remains in the world worth accepting?—David Hume. "Of Polygamy and Divorces," EMPL, 185

Smith believes that Hume approached "nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man, as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit." So far, I have focused mostly on Hume's public generosity to explain why Smith thought that Hume was virtuous. One might argue that Hume's wisdom consists, for Smith, of his prudent way in expressing his public spirit.⁷³ Certainly, this would fit Smith's generally cautious approach to public life. Nevertheless, this is not the view I defend here.

In section II.B above, I argue that, once Hume's material desires and need for public recognition were fulfilled, he could be tempted to prefer study and the "enjoyment . . . in the company of a few select companions," not the least of which was Adam Smith. "It was a friendship on both sides founded on the admiration of genius," Dugald Stewart remarked, "and the love of simplicity; and, which forms an interesting circumstance in the history of each of these eminent men, from the ambition which both have shewn to record it to posterity" ("Account of Smith," §I¶13, 273). I focus on Smith's desire to make a public declaration of his friendship with Hume.

Once Hume resigned himself to death, "he continued to divert himself, as usual," Smith reported, "with correcting his own works for a new edition, with reading books of amusement, with the conversation of his friends; and, sometimes, in the evening, with a party at his favourite game of whist" (xliv). Friendship is the most important theme in the "Letter to Strahan." Smith starts by promising "some account of the behaviour of our late excellent friend, David Hume" (xliv; Hume's "friends" are invoked in the next paragraph, too). And the last paragraph begins as follows: "Thus died our most excellent, and never to be forgotten friend" (xlviii). Smith also mentions Hume's unnamed "most affectionate friends" (xlv), his "most intimate friends" (xlvi), and the frequent visits of Hume's friends to his deathbed (xlvi).⁷⁴ Smith goes out of his way to

quote selectively (he omits Hume's references to the Dialogues) from Hume's last letter to him; it starts with Hume calling Smith, "MY DEAREST FRIEND" (xlvii). "Letter to Strahan" is very short. But there are at least ten instances where Smith talks about Hume's friends and their friendship for Hume and Hume's friendship for them. Smith may be overdoing this talk of friendship. After all, in "Of Tragedy," Hume says, "Nothing endears so much a friend as sorrow for his death. The pleasure of his company has not so powerful an influence" (EMPL, 222; cf. TMS III.3.32, 151).

Smith's focus on friendship, however, connects with wider themes in Hume and Smith.⁷⁵ They are adamant that commercial life, middle-class virtues, and friendship are compatible with each other and a life of philosophy. Hume brings these themes together in an essay he later withdrew, "Of the Middle Station of Life," in which he says that "These [men in the middle station] form most numerous Rank of men, that can be suppos'd susceptible of philosophy; and therefore, all Discourses of Morality ought principally to be address'd to them" (546), "the middle Station of Life, that is the most favourable to the acquiring of *Wisdom* and *Ability* as well as of *Virtue*," and "there is another Virtue, that seems principally to ly [sic] among Equals, and is, for that Reason, chiefly calculated for the middle Station of Life. This Virtue is FRIENDSHIP" (547). Hume says middle-class friends can be most confident of their mutual sincerity. This sincerity is not to due to the absence of exchange; in fact, "commerce" and mutual "Obligations" secure genuine friendship (EMPL, 547; see also, "Of Polygamy and Divorces, 189).⁷⁶ Smith endorses and explains this position by emphasizing even more than Hume the economic context as follows: "Colleagues in office, partners in trade, call one another brothers; and frequently feel towards one another as if they really were so. Their good agreement is an advantage to all; and, if they are tolerably reasonable people, they are naturally disposed to agree. We expect that they should do so; and their disagreement is a sort of a small scandal" (TMS VI.ii.i.15, 223–4).⁷⁷ Commercial life brings people together as mutually advantageous friends. Because the benefits of such friendships are mutual, it can be sincere—*pace* Rousseau's famous line from the *Second Discourse*: "to be and to appear to be, became two things very different" (quoted by Smith in "Letter to Edinburgh Review," ¶14, EPS, 252–3).

For Smith, friendship born of necessity is not merely compatible with prudence. It is crucial that "the prudent man . . . is always very capable of friendship" (TMS VI.i.9, 214). Prudence is the virtue most associated with middle-class values of hard work and industry (TMS VI.i.11, 215; the prudent man reappears in WN I.iv.2, 37; I.v.21, 55, etc.). Friendship, not wealth, is the source of true happiness for Smith: "there is a satisfaction in the consciousness

of being beloved, which, to a person of delicacy and sensibility, is of more to importance to happiness, than all the advantage which he can expect to derive from it. What character is so detestable as that of one who takes pleasure to sow dissension among friends" (TMS I.ii.4.1, 39)? That wealth is not the source of true happiness is also mentioned in WN: "because happiness and misery, which reside altogether in the mind, must necessarily depend more upon the healthful or unhealthful, the mutilated or entire state of the mind, than upon that of the body" (WN V.i.f.60, 787). If being prudent is a sufficient condition for being capable of friendship, and friendship is the major source of happiness, then real happiness is within reach of most people given that Smith thought prudence was within reach of most people in commercial society: "In the most glittering and exalted situation that our idle fancy can hold out to us, the pleasures from which we propose to derive our real happiness, are almost always the same with those which, in our actual, though humble stations, we have at all times at hand, and in our power."

[W]hat the favourite of the king of Epirus said to his master, may be applied to men in all the ordinary situations of human life. When the King had recounted to him, in their proper order, all the conquests which he proposed to make, and had come to the last of them; And what does your Majesty propose to do then? said the Favourite.— I propose then, said the King, to enjoy myself with my friends, and endeavour to be good company over a bottle.—And what hinders your Majesty from doing so now? replied the Favourite. (TMS III.3.31, 150)

Smith thinks that Hume was wise because he was able to keep his material gains in perspective and continue to value the company of his true friends. This does not mean merely that Hume balanced friendship with public spirit.⁷⁸

D. Philosophic Friendship

In the previous section, I show that, for Hume and Smith, sincere friendship is possible only when there is an equitable exchange of needs and gifts. Hume and Smith associate this with the prudential middle class that commercial societies produce.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, this is not the only form of friendship recognized by Hume and Smith. In this section, I explain the moral significance of their views on philosophic friendship.

Smith claims that in "civilized nations, the virtues . . . are founded upon humanity" (TMS V.2.8, 204) and he insists that sincerity itself is an achievement of commercial civilization: "A polished people being accustomed to give way, in some measure, to the movements of nature, become frank, open, and

sincere.” In contrast to Rousseau’s picture, the further one is removed from “savagery” or “barbarism,” the more possible sincerity becomes (V.2.11, 208). Finally, in commercial society the prudent man “is always sincere” (TMS VI.i.8, 214).⁸⁰

Nevertheless, Smith points out that the prudent man “is not always frank and open; and though he never tells any thing but the truth, he does not always think himself bound, when not properly called upon, to tell the whole truth” (TMS VI.i.8, 214). It is quite clear that while prudent friends may be sincere with each other, they would be foolish to tell each other the whole truth all the time. Excessive truth telling can cause hurt feelings and mutual irritation; it can be very bad for business, too. Even Hume says that *only* when he is detached from life and speaks in the past tense is he more “emboldened” to speak his “sentiments” (xl), but even then Hume does *not* promise to speak the *whole* truth.⁸¹ Complete frankness gets reserved for special occasions (cf. his letter to Oswald, 1 November 1750).⁸² But nowhere in TMS or WN does Smith tell us when this is the case.

Only in “Letter to Strahan,” does Smith provide an example of someone speaking the whole truth. According to Smith, Hume’s “magnanimity” enabled “frankness” between Hume and his friends. This frankness consists, at minimum, of Hume’s friends being able to talk about Hume’s death in his presence and with him; that is, they could speak the whole truth about Hume’s situation. Smith claims that this frankness “pleased and flattered” Hume (xlv–xlvi).

In TMS, Smith distinguishes between “inferior” and “superior prudence”; commercial society’s emblematic prudential man exhibits prudence of the inferior kind. Superior prudence, however, when directed “to greater and nobler purposes than the care of health, the fortune, the rank, and reputation” involves the additional virtues of valor, extensive benevolence, sacred regard for justice, and proper self-command.⁸³ This kind of superior prudence is reserved for generals, statesmen, legislators, and, when “carried to highest degree of perfection” philosophers. Superior prudence “supposes the utmost perfection of all the intellectual and moral virtues. It is the best head joined to the best heart. It is the most perfect wisdom combined with the most perfect virtue” (TMS VI.i.15, 216).

Because Smith calls special attention to Hume’s magnanimity, it is clear that Hume is not serving as the model of the prudent man of the inferior kind. The portrayal of “magnanimous” Hume in the “Letter to Strahan” is not merely another example of Smith’s defense of commercial society and typical prudent men in it. Smith thinks that if one possesses only inferior prudence, one is incapable of “performing the greatest and most magnanimous actions” (TMS VI.1.13, 216); these alone produce “real and solid glory.”

Smith ends the "Letter to Strahan:" "Upon the whole, I have always considered him, both in his lifetime and since his death, as approaching nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man, as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit" (xlix). Hence, for Smith, Hume must be more than an exemplar of inferior prudence.

In his letter to Sir Gilbert Elliot (*Correspondence*, Letter No. 40, 49), Smith says that his moral philosophy is designed to show that "real magnanimity and conscious virtue can support itself under the disapprobation of mankind." Smith's moral philosophy is designed to show how Hume's life is possible. Thus, his "Letter to Strahan" is integral to his moral teaching.

Hume is one of the few people who possess the superior prudence that enables that rare combination of public spiritedness and magnanimity; for Smith, only someone like Hume can experience the kind of friendship in which the complete truth is said. In TMS, Smith speaks of the possibility and nature of such friendship in passionate terms:

But of all attachments to an individual, that which is founded altogether upon the esteem and approbation of his good conduct and behaviour, confirmed by much experience and long acquaintance, is, by far, the most respectable. Such friendships, arising not from a constrained sympathy, not from a sympathy which has been assumed and rendered habitual for the sake of conveniency an accommodation; but from a natural sympathy, from an involuntary feeling that the persons to whom we attach ourselves are the natural and proper objects of esteem and approbation; can exist only among men of virtue. Men of virtue only can feel that entire confidence in the conduct and behaviour of one another, which can, at all times, assure them that they can never either offend or be offended by one another. . . . The attachment which is founded upon the love of virtue, as it is certainly, of all attachments, the most virtuous; so it is likewise the happiest, as well as the most permanent and secure. Such friendships need not be confined to a single person, but may safely embrace all the wise and virtuous, with whom we have been long and intimately acquainted, and upon whose wisdom and virtue we can, upon that account, entirely depend. (TMS VI.ii.I.18, 224–5)

For Smith, echoing Aristotle, friendship between the wise and the virtuous is of an entirely different kind than that between men of inferior prudence, whose friendship is the product of necessity and habit. Friendship from natural sympathy is the only certain reward for a philosopher in this life, if he is

lucky to be in the vicinity of a fellow philosopher (in the broadest meaning of this word; it would include Hume's friendship with the playwright John Home). Philosophic friendship is also founded on equality; it is based on mutual recognition of wisdom and virtue. This is quite rare because only the "most studious and careful observer" can discern the wise and virtuous; Smith has no doubt that there is only a "small party, who are the real and steady admirers of wisdom and virtue" (TMS I.iii.3.2, 62 and VI.ii.I.20, 226; Cf. *Correspondence*, Letter No. 31, from Hume, 33–6). Smith endorses, then, Hume's passionate elitism.

But, while Smith provides examples or anecdotes for most claims he makes in TMS, he gives no example of sacred and venerable friendship among the wise and virtuous, let alone one that safely embraces all the wise and virtuous. Only in the "Letter to Strahan" does he provide an example of genuine philosophic friendship, that is, between Hume and his closest intimates. But, even in the "Letter to Strahan," he says very little about the contents of their friendship. He says very little about the truths philosophers speak to each other. About this secrecy, Smith says:

[a] certain reserve is necessary when we talk of our own friends, our own studies, our own professions. All these are objects which we cannot expect should interest our companions in the same degree in which they interest us. And it is for want of this reserve, that the one half of mankind make bad company to the other. A philosopher is company to a philosopher only; the member of a club, to his own little knot of companions. (TMS I.ii.2.6, 34; cf. TMS VI.iii.31, 253)

NOTES

This paper was conceived as a response to a presentation by Ryan Hanley on Hume and Benjamin Franklin that turned into his 2002 article, "Hume's Last Lessons: The Civic Education of 'My Own Life,'" *Review of Politics*, 64. While most of our remaining differences are noted below, much of what follows has been untraceably influenced by the convergence of our views produced by discussion over many years. In the same period, I discussed much of the material in this paper with Lauren Brubaker and my students at The University of Chicago and Wesleyan University. For helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper, I thank, Dan Garber, Charles Larmore, Sam Fleischacker, David Levy, Ralph Lerner, Rob Brouwer, Christopher Berry, Joe La Porte, Iris Marion Young, Jacob Levy, Kevin Quinn, Percival Matthews, Abe Stone, Spencer Pack, Warren Samuels, Alessandro

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1 Conveniently, Strahan was the publisher of both Hume's and Smith's works; see footnote 2 to Hume's Letter No. 168 in *Correspondence of Adam Smith* (hereafter *Correspondence*), ed. Ernest Campbell Mossner and Ian Simpson Ross (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982), 208. The Liberty fund volume is a reprint of *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, vol. 6 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

2 Smith's *Correspondence*, Letter No. 157, 196, and Letter No. 165, to Hume, 205, editors' footnote. Oddly, in Letter No. 172, 211, Smith omits mention of "Of Suicide" and "Of Immortality of the Soul." See also Editor's note to "Of Suicide" in David Hume, 1985, revised edition, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, edited by Eugene W. Miller, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund. (Hereafter EMPL.)

3 A few months after Hume's death, Smith tried to dissuade Strahan from publishing some of Hume's letters with Hume's "Life" and Smith's "Letter to Strahan;" see, Letter No. 181, to Strahan, 223. It is a bit ironic that in doing so Smith appeals to Hume's will: "what in this case ought to be considered is the will of the Dead. Mr Humes [sic] constant injunction was to burn all his Papers, except the Dialogues and the account of his life. This injunction was even inserted in the body of his will."

4 It is not clear what concern Hume and Smith had about Smith's situation. At the time, Smith was not employed; he was living off the royalties of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (TMS), the then recently published *Wealth of Nations* (WN), and most of all on the annuity of three hundred pounds a year provided to him by the Duke of Buccleugh (whom Smith had tutored after he resigned his post in Glasgow), see *Correspondence*, Letter No. 106, 130, and Letter No. 76 from Charles Townshend, 95. His appointment as Commissioner of Customs followed in 1778. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982) a reprint of the *Glasgow Edition*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

5 Ian Simpson Ross, *The Life of Adam Smith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 302.

6 Ernest Campbell Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 605.

7 In the letter to Wedderburn, Smith continues with discussion of some of his conversations with Hume, including description of Hume's reading of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* and Hume's exchange with Charon quoted at the top of this paper. The letter to Wedderburn is very similar to Smith's published "Letter to Strahan," although Smith omits the comment about the "whining Christian" there.

8 Ross, 404–5.

9 Boswell’s “An Account of my Last Interview with David Hume, Esq.: partly recorded in my Journal, partly enlarged from my memory, 3 march 1777” (“An Account”) in James Boswell, *The Journals of James Boswell, 1762–1795*, ed. John Wain (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 247–51.

10 Ross, 133–4.

11 See, for example, Boswell’s diary entries for April 2, 1775, 115, and 16 March, 1776, in James Boswell, *Boswell: The Ominous Years, 1774–1776*, ed. Charles Ryskamp and Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), 257–8. On 13 April 1776, Boswell records Johnson as saying “Adam Smith was as dull a dog as he had ever met with” (337); Boswell responds, “it was strange to me to find my old professor in London, a professed infidel with a bag-wig.”

12 See *Boswell: The Ominous Years*, 337, quoted in previous footnote. In another entry, Boswell describes teasing Smith about being Commissioner of Customs at a March 1781 meeting with Burke, Gibbon, and others; when Gibbon defends Smith, Boswell remarks he does so “because he is a brother infidel” (*Journals*, 321).

13 If this is so, there is a parallel with Hume’s attempt to preempt the impact of Rousseau’s publication of his memoirs.

14 Mossner, 605–6.

15 All quotations from Hume’s “Life” are from EMPL. All other references to Hume’s essays are, unless otherwise noted, from this edition and are cited by page-number. Other works by Hume consulted are, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); cited by book, part, section, and paragraph as well as by page references in the second Selby-Bigge edition revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) (e.g., T 1.4.4.13; SBN 230); *The Letters of David Hume*. (hereafter *Letters*) ed. J. Y. T. Greig, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (abbreviated EHU), ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (abbreviated EPM), ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). All my references to Hume’s *Enquiries* are by section and paragraph numbers, and include page references to the third Selby-Bigge edition, as revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) (e.g., EPM 9.6; SBN 272–3).

16 John Home, *A Sketch of the character of Mr. Hume and Diary of a Journey from Morpeth to Bath, 23 April–1 May, 1776*, ed. David Fate Norton (Edinburgh: Tragara Press, 1976). Neither the diary nor the sketch was published in his lifetime.

17 All citations from Smith’s “Letter to Strahan” are from the version published in Hume’s EMPL.

18 See Ross, 304. Like Plato’s absence from Socrates’ death, Smith was not present for Hume’s.

19 Boswell writes, “I had a strong curiosity to be satisfied if [Hume] persisted in disbelieving a future state even when had death before his eyes. I was persuaded

from what he now said, and from the manner of saying it, that he did persist" (*Journals*, 248ff.) See also, "Of the Immortality of the Soul" (EMPL, 590–8), where Hume says that only divine revelation can sustain belief in the afterlife. Of course, for Hume, belief in divine revelation is itself based on the miracle of faith (EHU 10.2.40; SBN 131).

20 The only exception is his description of the *History of England*; Hume emphasizes his impartiality and the unexpected (to him, or so he claims) fury his account of the death of Charles I evoked in the book's audience. Hume notes, however, with amusement, that only the Primates of England and Ireland had written him not to be discouraged (xxxvi–xxxviii). There are also some tantalizing, metaphorical remarks on the *Treatise's* relationship with later works; see Jerome Christensen, *Practicing Enlightenment: Hume and the Formation of a Literary Career* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 45–52.

21 Roger Emerson, "The Philosophical Society of Edinburgh, 1748–1768," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 14 (1981): 146–7.

22 David Hume, *Exposé Succinct de la contestation, qui s'est élevée entre M. Hume et M. Rousseau* (London and Paris, 1766). See Christensen 1987, 51–2, and chapter 7 for details.

23 It is no doubt intentional (see *Letters*, vol. 2, Letter No. 366, 114).

24 Hanley (670) points out that Hume also emphasizes his methodical, single-minded focus on worldly success. In his account, Hume tends to downplay the patronage he relied on for advancement.

25 Hume sometimes distinguishes "philosophy" from "literature" (xxxvi), but for him "literature" does not have the narrow connotation (i.e., works of fiction) as it often does for us; for Hume and his contemporaries, it generally means "the pursuits of philosophy and general learning" (EMPL, xl; cf. Smith's "The History Astronomy," II¶12, 46). See Stephen Buckle "Hume's Biography and Hume's Philosophy: 'My Own Life' and *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1999): 7–8, for more extensive discussion and further examples from Hume's oeuvre. "The History of Astronomy" is in Adam Smith, *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* (hereafter EPS), ed. W. P. D. Wrightman and J. C. Bryce (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982), a reprint of the *Glasgow Edition*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

26 I agree with Hanley that Hume intends to serve—by appealing to interests and values of his readers—as a model to be emulated. But Hanley, 670 and 676, overlooks the fact that Hume's non-philosophical readers are reminded by Hume that his way to wealth is as a man of letters.

27 For an effort to put Hume in intellectual context, see Albert O. Hirschmann, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism Before Its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), and especially, Christopher J. Berry, *The Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

28 Hume omits mention of his inability to obtain two university appointments—one such occasion involves Smith’s prudence. In 1751, Smith made little effort on his behalf when Hume attempted to secure an appointment at the University of Glasgow: “I should prefer David Hume to any man for a colleague; but I am afraid the public would not be of my opinion; and the interest of the society will oblige us to have some regard to the opinion of the public” (Letter No. 10 to William Cullen, 5).

29 This conceptual contrast helps explain the different approaches to the Enlightenment and commercial life as well as the philosophic self-conceptions of Rousseau and Hume. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, sides with Hume (and Smith) against Rousseau.

30 In “Of Essay-Writing” Hume adopts the diplomatic metaphor of being an “Ambassador from the Dominions of Learning to those of Conversation,” but he quickly switches to commercial metaphor of maintaining a “Balance of Trade” in the “commerce” between both sides (EMPL, 535).

31 For a different argument with the same conclusion, see Hanley 660 and 682–4.

32 This private elitism is entirely compatible with a wide variety of political positions.

33 Cf. Hanley, 681–2.

34 It is, of course, not the only society compatible with the existence of philosophy. In “The History of Astronomy” (especially ¶3–5, 50–2 in EPS), Smith discusses the social, geographic, and political conditions that allow for philosophy to get started.

35 This is not to say Hume never criticizes vanity. For example, in EPM vanity is contrasted unfavorably with a desire for fame; he writes of vanity that it “is so justly regarded as a fault or imperfection,” (8.11, SBN 266). Nevertheless, in context Hume has in mind only the “secret” forms that vanity can take. Later in EPM, Hume points out that the existence of vanity in a person is a necessary condition for the delight in praise (Appendix 2.12; SBN 301). Because Hume insists that a “desire of fame . . . is so far from being blameable, that it seems inseparable from virtue, genius, capacity, and a generous or noble disposition” (EPM 8.11; SBN 265), it would be strange, if not inconsistent, for him to say that the vanity that enables the existence of this desire of fame is entirely a fault.

36 Smith was not present for the actual death. He reports the written account he received from Hume’s doctor, Black. Hume remarks on the truthfulness of his other doctor, Dundas, earlier in Smith’s piece (xliv), but it is difficult to know whether Hume’s remarks are part of his habitual raillery (xlviii). One surprising discrepancy in Black’s account is his claim that Hume “never dropped the smallest expression of impatience” (xlviii; see also xlvii), while Hume’s own last letter to Smith—quoted by Smith between the two letters by Black—indicates that Hume “hoped” his “tedious illness” would soon end! (xlvii)

37 The context I sketch is not the only one; Hanley compares Hume’s autobiography to Benjamin Franklin’s and connects both to Plutarch’s *Lives*. Hanley, 682,

also calls attention to Aristotle's treatment of magnanimity in relation to Smith's "Letter to Strahan." One could also consider Hume's debt to Montaigne (Emerson, personal correspondence) or Cicero's treatment of reputation, glory, and friendship (Berry, personal correspondence).

38 This topic has received surprising little attention. See, for suggestive remarks, Charles Griswold, *Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999), 44ff; and Lauren Brubaker, *Adam Smith and the Limits of Enlightenment*, doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 2002. It is, however, a major theme of a recently published book by Samuel Fleischacker, *On Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations: A Philosophical Companion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

39 This raises questions about how Smith thought differences of philosophic opinion are settled throughout history. I discuss this in my "Realism in the Face of Scientific Revolutions: Adam Smith on Newton's 'Proof' of Copernicanism," forthcoming in *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*.

40 My quotations are from Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (WN), ed. R. H. Campbell, A. S. Skinner, and W. B. Todd (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1984) a reprint of the *Glasgow Edition*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, as revised in 1979).

41 Nevertheless, Smith also provides evidence of the fact that Hume died a very wealthy man (xlv), but no overwhelming evidence of large amounts of charity. This is in contrast with Dugald Stewart's report concerning the situation at the end of Smith's life in his "Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, LL.D." ("Account of Smith"): "the state of [Smith's] funds at the time of his death, compared with his very moderate establishment, confirmed, beyond a doubt, what his intimate acquaintances had often suspected, that a large proportion of his annual savings was allotted to offices of secret charity" (§V¶4, 325–6, EPS). Perhaps Smith had so much confidence in his own reputation that he refrained from mentioning an obvious and widely known example of Hume's generosity: his efforts on Rousseau's behalf. Hume's efforts consisted mostly in finding a place for Rousseau to live and obtaining a pension for Rousseau from the British King. Although Hume put his reputation on the line, it is always easier to be charitable with other people's money.

42 Smith was not the only one struck by it: Dr. Cullen wrote a letter to Dr. Hunter about the exchange; see Mossner, *Life*, 601.

43 In Letter No. 166 to Hume (the one in which Smith asks permission for his addition), Smith refers to the "steady cheerfulness" of Hume (*Correspondence*, 206).

44 Quoted from Boswell's diary in Mossner, *Life*, 605–6.

45 Recall Smith's Letter to Wedderburn: "Poor David Hume is dying very fast . . . with more real resignation to the necessary course of things, than any Whining Christian ever dyed with pretended resignation to the will of God" (*Correspondence*, 203).

46 Lucian gets high literary praise from Hume in "Of The Rise and Progress of Arts and Sciences," 134, EMPL. When Adam Smith lectured, he had only the

highest literary and moral praise for Lucian: “By the different ends that Swift and Lucian have had in view, they have formed a complete system of ridicule . . . But both together form a System of morality from whence more sound and just rules of life for all the various characters of men may be drawn than from most set systems of Morality.” (See Adam Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (LRBL), ed. J.C. Bryce (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985) a reprint of the *Glasgow Edition*, vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), lecture 9, i.124–5, 50–1). Cf. footnote to ¶39 in “Observations made by Jean-Jacques Rousseau of Geneva On the Answer made to his [first] Discourse” in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Œuvres Complètes* (OC), ed. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond (Paris: Pléiade: 1959–95), 3: 46.

47 I have rearranged the quotation, but I do not think I have changed Hume’s intent here. In “Of Populosity of Ancient Nations” (EMPL, 463), Hume implies in a footnote that Lucian is, together with Cicero, the least superstitious among ancient philosophers. He mentions Lucian again in *The Natural History of Religion*, chapter 12. Little attention has been given to Hume’s life-long interest in Lucian.

48 The comparison with Smith’s letter to Wedderburn shows that, in his “Letter to Strahan,” Smith significantly toned down the anti-Christian and anti-clerical elements in both Hume’s imaginary exchange with Charon and in his own remarks on Hume’s conduct. In the “Letter to Strahan,” Hume is only waiting to see “the downfall of some of the prevailing systems of superstition,” while, in the version to Wedderburn, Hume wants to see “the churches shut up, and the Clergy sent about their business.” Dr Cullen’s version is much closer to the version given in the letter to Wedderburn: “Hume thought he might say he had been very busily employed in making countrymen wiser and particularly in delivering them from the Christian superstition, but that he had not yet completed that great work” (quoted in Mossner, *Life*, 601). Smith’s careful prudence in this respect is some evidence against the view that he wrote the “Letter to Strahan” under deep emotional stress; cf. Mossner, *Life*, 605. Smith may have genuinely been surprised by the vehemence of the reaction to it. For references on these attacks, see Mossner, *Life*, 1620, and E. C. Mossner, “Philosophy and Biography: The Case of David Hume,” *Philosophical Review* 59 (1950): 184–201.

49 See Buckle, 9–11, for discussion.

50 On Smith’s critique of Mandeville and Hobbes, see Griswold 1999, 53–4, and James R. Otteson, *Adam Smith’s Marketplace of Life* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), 144–8. On Hume’s criticism, see Eugene Heath, “Critical Study: J. Martin Stafford’s *Private Vices, Public Benefits?*,” *Hume Studies* 30 (1999): 231–4. On Hume’s debt to Hobbes, see Jean Hampton, “The Hobbesian Side of Hume,” in *Reclaiming the History of Ethics: Essays for John Rawls*, ed. Andrews Reath, Barbara Herman, and Christine Korsgaard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 66–101, and Spencer Pack and Eric Schliesser, “Adam Smith’s ‘Humean’ Criticism of Hume’s Account of the Origin of Justice,” forthcoming in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*.

51 Hanley makes many fine observations on this issue without drawing on Smith's "Letter to Strahan." Hume's writings are designed to imagine or create a "Public" that, in turn, can judge him. In the "Advertisement" to the *Treatise*, Hume makes mention of his desire to "try the taste of the public." He goes on to claim that he considers the "approbation of the public" to be his "greatest reward" and, regardless of its judgment, his "best instruction." See Buckle, 11, for more on this issue.

52 In "The Skeptic" Hume included Lucian among the "entertaining moralists," and singles out for praise his "imagination" (EMPL, 179).

53 Plato and Marcus Aurelius are the only philosophers called "humane" by Smith; Plato's writings are said to seem to be animated with "love of mankind" (TMS V.2.15, 210).

54 For Smith, we judge an action by the actor's motives and the (foreseeable) consequences of this action (TMS III, Introduction, 5–6, 93).

55 For Hume, "superstition" is associated with any religious system that tries to "appease" invisible gods through "ceremonies, observances, mortifications, sacrifices, presents . . . in any practice, however absurd or frivolous, which either folly or knavery recommends to a blind and terrified credulity. Weakness, fear, melancholy, together with ignorance, are, therefore, the true sources of SUPERSTITION" ("Of Superstition and Enthusiasm," EMPL, 74). In Hume's suppressed essay, "Of Suicide," he claims that "when sound philosophy has once gained possession of the mind, superstition is effectually excluded" 579.

56 Smith certainly did not approve of all of Hume's actions. He detested the monument that Hume had designed to be built after his death: "I do not like that monument. It is the greatest piece of vanity I ever saw in my friend Hume." Ross, 302, cites the second edition of Mossner's biography of Hume, 591.

57 Smith believed that the "study of science and philosophy" can have a social utility in suppressing "enthusiasm and superstition;" this is why he advocates mandatory exams in them for anybody who wants to practice a profession (WN V.i.9.14, 796; V.i.f.50–6, 781–6). Smith thought that an educated populace was necessary to maintain freedom, public accountability, and public order in a modern society (WN V.i.f.61, 788). Nevertheless, Smith realized that the division of labor in modern commercial society could cause common laborers to lack basic education and to be so overworked as to make them suffer "the torpor of mind" (WN V.i.f.50, 781). This is why he does not rely on education alone; he also recommends public "diversions" (e.g., "painting, poetry, musick, dancing" and "all sorts of dramatic representations and exhibitions") to "amuse" people's minds and make (political and religious) fanatics the objects of "ridicule" (WN V.i.g.15, 796–7). Therefore, Smith would not accept Hume's statement that "industry, knowledge, and humanity, are linked together by an indissoluble chain." Smith thinks some virtues are lost in transition to commercial society: for example, the "magnanimity" of the "savage" West African is clearly praised in contrast to the "baseness" and "brutality" of the "sordid" European "masters" (TMS V.2.9, 206). Smith believes that, on balance, the transition to commercial society is a good

thing due to alleviation of poverty (WN I.i.11), but he is aware of the losses and cruelty it entails.

58 Hume and Smith were steeped in classical literature. See Gloria Vivenza, *Adam Smith and the Classics: The Classical Heritage in Adam Smith's Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), although she does not mention Lucian. Hume seems to refer to the *Menexenus* at EPM, VII.25; SBN 259; Smith explicitly comments on the style of the dialogue in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ii.124, 141. Hume refers to the *Laws* in "Of Civil Liberty" (EMPL, 88), *The Natural History of Religion*, chapter 4; Smith refers to the *Laws* at TMS VII.iv.37, 341, and, indirectly, at WN III.ii.9, 388. Book 3 of the *Laws* is a form of conjectural history that became quite popular in the Scottish Enlightenment.

59 Smith's willingness to admit that common sense is not so common and that many people do not act as rational creatures has ramifications for understanding his moral theory and epistemology.

60 Smith calls attention to the importance of his criticism of Mandeville in his letter to Sir Gilbert Elliot (*Correspondence*, Letter No. 40, 49); see Brubaker 2002 for detailed discussion of this letter.

61 In his tax policies, Smith suggests that the "indolence and vanity of the rich [can] contribute in a very easy manner to the relief of the poor, by rendering cheaper the transportation of heavy goods to all the different parts of the country" (WN V.i.d, 725). Again, for Smith much of our vanity is misplaced and can lead to self-deception, inflated self-conception, and willful ignorance of the bad conditions of the poor; that is, by distorting our sentiments, it can undermine our humanity or our impartial spectators (e.g., TMS I.iii.3.7, 64; III.3-4, 134-61 and VI.III.22, 246). Moreover, the maintenance of cartels among employers, not a good thing according to Smith, is explained by the susceptibility to peer-pressure of merchants and their bouts of vanity (WN I.viii.13, 84 and V.i.f.4, 759-60). For more detailed treatments of the role vanity plays in Smith's philosophy, see Ralph Lerner, "Love of fame and the constitution of liberty," in *Geschichte und Recht: Festschrift für Gerald Stourzh zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Thomas Angerer, Birgitta Bader-Zaar, and Margarete Grandner (Vienna: Böhlau, 1999).

62 Hume makes a sharp distinction between private and public life in "Of Refinement in the Arts," EMPL, 269ff.

63 Smith's egalitarianism on this score is even stronger than Rousseau's. For Rousseau, education and socialization increase already existing (minor) natural differences (e.g., *Second Discourse*, Part I, ¶48, OC III, 160-1). Murray N. Rothbard, in *An Austrian Perspective on the History of Economic Thought* (Brookfield, VT: Edward Elgar, 1995) is, while criticizing Smith, most adamant about exposing Smith's "extreme" egalitarianism; in substance, he follows Joseph A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, ed. Elizabeth Boody Schumpeter (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 186.

64 Smith points out that in the modern world philosophy, too, can be divided into sub-disciplines (WN I.i.9, 21-22).

65 One anonymous referee suggests that Hume's use may have been a bit archaic and idiosyncratic, as exemplified by the many instances in *Treatise* 2.1.9, "Of external advantages and disadvantages."

66 Roger Emerson (personal communication) is skeptical about how much of Hume's wealth is connected to income earned through writings. Nevertheless, what is important, for Hume, is that his social standing, and the employment derived from it, is based on his career as a Man of Letters.

67 For more discussion of Smith's views on philosophy, see Eric Schliesser "Some Principles of Adam Smith's 'Newtonian' Methods in the Wealth of Nations," forthcoming in *Research in History of Economic Thought and Methodology*, vol. 23A, 2005; "Adam Smith's Endorsement of Deception," forthcoming in *Adam Smith Review*, 2004; "Making the Invisible Hand Visible: Adam Smith's Conception of Philosophy," in progress.

68 David M. Levy, "Adam Smith's Katallactic Model of Gambling: Approbation from the Spectator." *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 21 (1999): 81–92, presents an analytic treatment of this issue within Smith's framework.

69 Smith makes the following disconcerting move in explaining the distinction: "Humanity is the virtue of a woman, generosity of a man." Yet, in WN many appeals are made to the reader's humanity (I.viii.44, 100; IV.ii.40, 469; V.ii.e.6, 842; I.viii.36, 96.)

70 Despite his admiration for Socrates, Smith takes Socrates to task for thinking that he had contact with an invisible and divine being at TMS, VI.iii.5, 238–9). Smith's account is a psychologically more satisfying extension of the observation (by Cerberus) in Lucian's *Dialogue of the Dead* (421): "since [Socrates] could see [death] was inescapable, he put on a bold front, pretending he would be glad to accept what was quite inevitable, all to win the admiration of the onlookers" (trans. M. D. MacLeod, in *Lucian in Eight Volumes* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936–67], 7: 21)).

71 In context, Smith is praising Hume's ability to remain cheerful in the face of death during his friends' visits. Hume has some misgivings about excessive magnanimity (see EHU 5.1; SN 40). It is tempting to see Smith's praise of Hume's magnanimity as an instance of what Hume often calls "greatness of mind" (EPM 7.4; SBN 252). Smith uses the phrase "greatness of mind" rarely—the two instances I have been able to find are confined to TMS III—and then quite casually.

72 The importance of this is signaled not only in the "Letter to Strahan," but also at the start of TMS: "It is miserable, we think . . . to be shut out from life and conversation; to be laid in the cold grave, a prey to corruption and the reptiles of the earth; to be no more thought of in this world, but to be obliterated, in a little time, from the affections, and almost from the memory, of their dearest friends and relations" (I.i.13, 12).

73 See Hanley, 674 and 684.

74 The playwright John Home (who attended to Hume on his last trip to England, “with that care and attention which might be expected from a temper so perfectly friendly and affectionate; see xlv), Colonel Edmonstone (xliv–xlv), and Strahan are named as friends. Dr. Black, Hume’s physician, is also mentioned.

75 For recent treatment, see Lauren Brubaker. “A Particular Turn or Habit of the Imagination”: Adam Smith on Love, Friendship, and Philosophy,” in *Love and Friendship: Rethinking Politic and Affection in Modern Times* ed. Eduardo Velasquez (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003); cf. Douglas den Uyl and Charles Griswold, “Adam Smith on Friendship and Love,” *Review of Metaphysics* 49 (1996): 609–37.

76 Smith’s lectures at the University of Glasgow provide further evidence of why Hume is attracted to Lucian: “[Lucian] was of a merry gay and jovial temper with no inconsiderable portion of levity. He was a follower of the Epicurean or rather of the Cyrenaic Sect; his principles are all adapted to that scheme of life where the chief thing is to pass it easily and happily, and with as much pleasure as we possibly can. And as Life is short and transitory he lays it down as a maxim that we ought not to omit any present happiness in expectation of a greater to come butt lay hold of the present opportunity. Friendship and the exercise of the social [sic] affections are in his opinion the chief fund for enjoyment and consequently chiefly to be cultivated” (LRBL, Lecture 9, 1.121, 49; these are reported by a student.)

77 It is odd that a natural disposition is dependent on people being tolerably reasonable. I do not know what to make of this in the context of Smith’s broader views.

78 “[A] man, who is only susceptible to friendship, without public spirit, or a regard to the community, is deficient in the most material part of virtue” (“That Politics May be Reduced to a Science,” EMPL, 27).

79 This responds to Rousseau’s *Second Discourse* (Part I, ¶37, OC III, 155–6).

80 One might think that, in WN, Smith qualifies this claim by distinguishing between nations that consist “in a great measure of proprietors and cultivators” that grow wealthy through “industry and enjoyment” and nations “composed chiefly of merchants, artificers, and manufacturers” that can grow rich only through parsimony and privation.” Only in the former do “liberality, frankness and good fellowship naturally make a part of that common character” in the latter “narrowness, meanness, and a selfish disposition, averse to all social pleasure and enjoyment” (IV.ix.13, 668). But, Smith is merely summarizing Physiocrats here.

81 This astonishing statement by Hume has received too little attention in the scholarly literature.

82 See Hume’s Letters, Vol. 1, 142–4.

83 For the importance of the Aristotelian roots of self-command in Smith’s theory of the virtues (it is what adds “luster” to the other virtues), see Leonidas Montes, *Adam Smith in Context: A Critical Reassessment of Some Central Components of His Thought* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), and also P. H. Werhane, *Adam Smith and his Legacy for Modern Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).