

NATURALISM, EXPERIENCE, AND HUME'S 'SCIENCE OF HUMAN NATURE'

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A standard interpretation of Hume's naturalism is that it paved the way for a scientific and 'disenchanted' conception of the world. My aim in this paper is to show that this is a restrictive reading of Hume, and it obscures a different and profitable interpretation of what Humean naturalism amounts to. The standard interpretation implies that Hume's 'science of human nature' was a reductive investigation into our psychology. But, as Hume explains, the subject matter of this science is not restricted to introspectively accessible mental content and incorporates our social nature and interpersonal experience. Illuminating the science of human nature has implications for how we understand what Hume means by 'experience' and thus how we understand the context of his epistemological investigations. I examine these in turn and argue overall that Hume's naturalism and his science of man do not simply anticipate a disenchanted conception of the world.

Keywords: Hume; Naturalism; Experience; Phenomenology;

Naturalism and Disenchantment

Book I of Hume's *Treatise* culminates in considering the disturbing predicament that the "current of nature" determines us, inescapably, to possess beliefs for which we can find no rational justification (1978, 269). By way of response Hume is said to have provided a powerful 'naturalized epistemology', seeking to account for our knowledge and epistemic practices more generally in a scientifically acceptable way. If successful, such a naturalistic approach promises to surmount any sceptical conclusions implied by the disturbing predicament, since the uneasy relation between reason and nature may be resolved by recasting the relation between them. For example, in adopting what he considers a Humean perspective, Quine proposed that naturalized epistemology need not assume that questions of justification are a distinctive part of a self-standing subject matter; rather, naturalized epistemology would describe the psychological processes of belief formation. Accordingly naturalism subsumes epistemology and makes it, famously, "simply ... a chapter of psychology and hence of natural science" (Quine 1969, 82).¹

¹ In characterizing philosophical naturalism it is usual to distinguish between interrelating ontological, epistemological and methodological aspects. What unifies these aspects, if anything, is a matter of

Strawson's alternative view characterizes Hume's naturalism as a kind of refuge from his epistemological reflections (1985, 12). We would need a refuge since the discoveries of reason are, inevitably, sceptical ones which threaten to destabilize our everyday understandings of the world and of our experience. From inside the refuge, as it were, we can look upon the discoveries of reason as intellectual curiosities but never as genuine opportunities for our theoretical or practical assent. Thus a third 'biperspectivalist' approach, suggests Michael Williams, claims that at best we oscillate between the perspectives of naturalism and scepticism, turning (or perhaps being driven) from one to the other depending on context. A plausible interpretation of Hume's project might ensure that both the rational and natural elements are adequately recognized but, so far, it seems that interpreters have tended to focus on just one of them (Williams 2004, 271).²

Whatever the most successful interpretive strategy it is important to be clear that the subject matter of Hume's "science of man" (e.g., 1978, 16) incorporates the relation between nature and reason, this relation is thus part of what we would expect Hume's naturalism to encompass. Whilst the importance of this "science of human nature" cannot be overstated its character and implications have been overlooked by some influential interpretations of Hume. The result is that what is meant by 'Humean naturalism' is needlessly restrictive and the possibility of appreciating the breadth of Hume's naturalism is subsequently blocked.

The restriction in question occurs because of a tendency, displayed by both critics and supporters alike, to read Hume's naturalism to involve a narrowly psychological view of human practice. Hume's appeal to psychology presupposes metaphysical assumptions distinctive of what nowadays is described as a scientific world view. Accordingly Hume's science of man is assumed to be an investigation into our epistemic practices that takes for granted the privileged status of the scientifically

continuing dispute. But an overarching thesis is that natural science is to have priority in giving us an account of what exists and that philosophical inquiry is to be guided by, if not become part of, natural scientific investigation. A proper treatment would need to distinguish the subcategories within each of these aspects, also interrelating with each other and other subcategories. For ontological versions see, for example, Maddy (2007); Papineau (1993). For examples of naturalism's epistemological aspects see Quine (1969); Kornblith (2002).

² See also Stroud (2006, 342). 'Naturalist' readings of Hume include Norman Kemp Smith (1905a), (1905b) and (1941); Stroud (1977); Fogelin (1985); Mounce (1999). Perhaps the most famous 'sceptical' interpretation is presented in Kant (1998). More recent versions include Strawson (1985). Williams also suggests a 'critical' reading such as that found in Ayer (1980) and Bennett (1971).

described world. This has the effect of characterizing Hume’s project as one that tries to ‘place’ our practices and our human nature more widely *within* the world as scientifically described.³

Hume is read as being committed to an austere metaphysics and was, in McDowell’s words, the “prophet *par excellence*” of a so-called disenchanting conception of the world, the view according to which the world is an “ineffable lump” (1998, 174-175).⁴ Similarly David Lewis writes that Hume’s world is exhausted by “a vast mosaic of local matters of particular fact, just one little thing after another” (1986, ix). These images, although quite different in some respects, both reflect a view about the metaphysics deemed to be characteristic of the Humean natural-scientific framework. On the face of it such a metaphysical view is not easy to reconcile with the aspiration to conduct the science of man as Hume characterizes it. The constraints of an austere naturalist ontology might jeopardize the idea that ‘man’ or ‘human nature’ in the relevant senses can themselves be appropriate objects of study. The conception of the world as disenchanting might be supposed as the context from which a science of man is subsequently conducted. But as I understand it *that* conception of the world is already a partial conclusion of a particular kind of philosophical inquiry, not its condition. For Hume, human beings are not only the possible but the principal objects of philosophical inquiry and the science of man is not some attempt to understand ourselves against the backdrop of the world construed as an ineffable lump.

As Hume explains human nature is the cardinal focus of the science of man, the study of which is not additional to but is presupposed by other sciences:

’Tis evident, that all the sciences have a relation, greater or less, to human nature; and that however wide any of them may seem to run from it, they still return back by one passage or another. Even Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural Religion, are in some measure dependent on the science of Man ...

³ For a characterization of the ‘placement problem’ in the context of contemporary accounts of naturalism see Price (2011).

⁴ Such remarks suggest that Hume himself had a ‘scientific’ conception of the world, but McDowell emphasizes that Hume was innocent of the historical explanation of the modern disenchanting view of the world. Stroud (1977, 223) also remarks that ‘scientism’ was alien to Hume’s thought and to the eighteenth century more generally.

[T]he science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences (1978, xv-xvi).⁵

Here, in the Introduction to the *Treatise*, Hume explicitly articulates the idea that the science of man is of foundational importance. Hume also takes care to explain that when the science of man proceeds *via* the “cautious observation of human” life it incorporates ordinary features of our lives that are to be described as far as possible “as they appear in the common course of the world” (1978, xix). These remarks refer to aspects of our lives that cannot be identified as, let alone solely explained in terms of, psychological properties or tendencies. Yet an influential way of interpreting Hume is to reduce or restrict his naturalism to a thesis about how are minds process and render intelligible the data provided by the senses – our ‘experience’ – and the interrelations between psychological mechanisms such as the role of memory and the felt “force” or “vivacity” of impressions and ideas (1978, 96).

There should be no objection to Hume being described as a naturalist. But, in addition to the logical point that the science of man is presupposed by what is nowadays meant by scientific naturalism, what is open to cautious observation is more than what can be characterized in psychological terms. This at least raises a question about what constitutes the subject matter of or the input to the science of man. Any answer, I suggest, ought to distinguish between two different senses of experience. I do this in the next section before turning to the implications for characterizing Hume’s epistemology.

Hume on Experience

Hume means different things when he uses the term ‘experience’. One use is individualistic and introspectionist, experience of sense and memory which can be reached or recalled by turning reflection inwards, to the interior of our psychic domain. But Hume also invokes another sense of experience, less solipsistic and more social, experience of ‘common life and observation’. We ought not to cleave too cleanly between these different kinds of experience since they overlap. For example, whilst all

⁵ See also the ‘Abstract’.

our experience for Hume involves perceptions of sense and memory, the majority of our experience occurs on a social level (Traiger 1994, 253).⁶

In the majority of cases where Hume invokes experience in Book I of the *Treatise* it is used in a fairly narrow sense as part of the analysis of, for example, the nature and origin of causal inference (e.g., 1978, 163). In this context and others such as the discussion about the existence of objects when unperceived (e.g., 1978, 188) experience is broken down into particular discrete instances. Merleau-Ponty would later describe how this led Hume to “dissect” experience (2002, 256). Yet Books II and III of the *Treatise*, for example, as well as the first *Enquiry* are replete with examples of experience used in the wider sense. Hume frequently refers to “daily experience” and “common experience” and does so in order to demonstrate the truth (or otherwise) of some proposed analysis of our ideas. For example, the causes of love and hatred are revealed by “undeniable proofs drawn from daily experience” and the “phaenomena that occur to us in common life and conversation” help to explain how we regard persons in authority (1978, 347, 361).

Hume explains that a person’s experience can be expanded through interaction with others. In the first *Enquiry* Hume talks of processes that “enlarge ... the sphere of one man’s experience and thought” (1975, 107). Enlarged experience is achieved, for example, through engaging “testimony, books and conversation” (1975, 107) all explicit examples of interpersonal experience, not experience construed as inner states or as instances as we find in Book I of the *Treatise*. What I want to emphasize here is that this sense of experience, of common life and conversation in the ordinary course of the world, is a principal and irreducible element in Hume’s science of man.⁷ This has implications for a different interpretation of Hume’s naturalism, one that arguably provides a form of intelligibility different from that provided by modern science and aims instead to elucidate the ordinary features of human experience living in a world with other people.

⁶ Traiger distinguishes between four senses of experience in Hume: (1) evidence of sense and memory; (2) common life and conversation; (3) testimony of history; (4) the fidelity of “printers and copists”. See Traiger (1994, 253).

⁷ In Book I of the *Treatise* Hume also uses enlargement to explain how the repetition of experiences (in the narrow sense) can in some cases not just “multiply” our ideas but “enlarge” them; that is, that we come to form new ideas on the basis of multiplicity, but which not to have their direct source in any instance of experience. See (1978, 163).

When describing how the science of man is presupposed by the other sciences, Hume goes on to say that the “only solid foundation” of the science of man, in turn, “must be laid on experience and observation” (1978, xvi). What Hume must have in mind here is the experience and observation of “common life” and not, or not just, experience in the sense of inner states or instances of sensory experience. Hume insisted that philosophical reflection ought to be constrained by experience and it never should attempt to reach beyond it (e.g., 1978, xvii). But this does not mean that the constraint in question is provided by introspection; the relevant sense of experience is not, or not just, a stock of private, inner episodes. The cautious observation of human life does not equate to the cautious observation of inner psychological states.

What Hume’s pluralism about experience implies is that there are different ways in which we make the subject matter of the science of human nature intelligible. I have been suggesting that there is at least one sense of experience in Hume that refers irreducibly to our intersubjective interaction. The cautious observation of human life reveals that the activity of reflecting on common experience is interestingly different from the activity of reflecting on our inward or private experience. It is different because it distinguishes between what is and what is not possible to entertain (or, better, to *do*) as a reflective agent. We are bound to hold beliefs, such as those about necessary connection for instance, irrespective of the conclusions of rational reflection. This – to repeat – is not just a psychological point about what is or is not possible to entertain or imagine. It is a point about our nature as embodied, intersubjective creatures, a point about our human nature.

Another way to distinguish between the different contents is to contrast the abstract reflection of the solitary thinker, descending into the familiar sceptical *cul de sac*, with the engaged person who is immersed in common life. In the first case, rational reflection on the grounds of belief “entirely subverts itself” and leaves the thinker in a state of spectatorial alienation (Hume 1978, 267). Such a person is detached not only from the ordinary world of external objects and other people, but also from their own ideas and experience. No wonder Hume portrays such a state in terms that are reminiscent of descriptions of psychiatric illness. In the conclusion of Book I, Hume writes:

I am first affrighted and confounded with that forelorn solitude, in which I am plac'd in my philosophy, and fancy myself some strange uncouth monster, who not being able to mingle and unite in society, has been expell'd all human commerce, and left utterly abandon'd and disconsolate ... no one will hearken to me. Every one keeps at a distance, and dreads that storm, which beats upon me from every side (1978, 264).

The sceptical conclusions are the outcome of applying reason in the search for the grounds of our ideas, yet this application and its results are examples of *abstract* reasoning; a mode of reflection that presupposes common life. Hume explains that when reason subverts itself the result is “total scepticism” since we are left with no reasons to believe one thing rather than any other thing “either in philosophy or common life”. But Hume does not think that the “refin'd or elaborate reasoning” that leads us to scepticism is thereby shown to be mistaken. Were we to refuse to employ abstract reasoning then we would “cut off entirely all science and philosophy” (1978, 268). The mistake, if there is one, is to construe the scepticism as if it revealed the basic condition of our experience and thought, a condition from which we are merely distracted when engaged in common life. Insisting that we ought to believe that scepticism is foundational in this sense would involve a “manifest contradiction”; the subverting effect of rational reflection provides us with no reasons to believe anything at all.

The point is that abstract reasoning and the content of our experience and thought at the level of common life are both part of what we consider in the science of man. They are different expressions of our human nature, different ways in which we make things intelligible. Likewise, the disenchanted conception of the world that Hume is supposed to champion is not foundational, as if it were a more genuine or authentic conception of the way things are. Formulating a disenchanted conception of the world should not be seen as the principal aspiration of Hume's naturalism. My objection is specifically to the assumption that Hume's primary commitment *qua* naturalist is a metaphysical one, a commitment that is emblematic of what is nowadays referred to as a scientific standpoint. Hume's naturalism is more complex and more humane than

this. Appreciating this has implications, as I have been trying to show, for how we characterize experience and for how we construe Hume's epistemology.

What I have been urging is that reading Hume as the 'prophet of disenchantment' has a significant effect on what we then come to see as the subject matter of the science of man. If Hume's method really was to, firstly, set forth a disenchanted conception of the world and then, secondly, to explain the grounds of our experience and thought in light of that, then no sense can be made of how Hume himself conceived of the science of man. If we describe Hume's method in this way then the vital role that Hume gave to common life is obscured.⁸ A result is that the main focus becomes the narrow epistemological investigations that occupy the majority of Book I of the *Treatise*.

I have objected to the idea that Hume is primarily a scientific naturalist, and elaborated that objection by drawing attention to what constitutes the subject matter of the science of man. The influence of what I am objecting to is widespread, and has affected what is understood to be the chief aim of Hume's work. The dominance of the so-called 'Oxford view' casts Hume as primarily an epistemologist with a notable enthusiasm for the explanatory potential of psychology.⁹ The Oxford view underpins the reception of Hume in 'analytic' philosophy but it is also influential in how the phenomenological tradition has characterized the nature and role of experience in Hume's work.

Phenomenology and Hume's Epistemology

Inspired by Merleau-Ponty the phenomenologist Samuel Todes developed an account of embodied perception, describing experience as articulating a "life-field" – a domain of enticements and opportunities in which the nature of perceptual objects reflect our bodily capacities (2001). Todes claims that it is through our responsive actions and our embodied agency more widely that the field of experience is engaged, sustained and

⁸ See Fogelin (2009, 6-7) for a characterization of the different 'voices' to be found in Hume and a warning that the standpoint of common life can be easily overlooked.

⁹ The 'Oxford view' refers to the interpretation described by Duncan Forbes as "the Locke-Berkeley-epistemology-only Hume". See Forbes's introduction to Hume's *History of England* (1970, 9). I learned this from R.W. Connon's essay 'The Naturalism of Hume Revisited' (1979), see his footnote 4 for further details and explanation.

negotiated. Todes characterized perception as an active and more or less skilled practical accommodation and receptiveness to what the world affords by way of opportunities to have our needs (as Todes puts it) satisfied.¹⁰ According to Todes our perceptual-bodily responsiveness is a form of practical engagement with the world, an engagement that incorporates a preparation to encounter the on-going affordances and meanings that present themselves in our experience (2001, 72). Like Merleau-Ponty, Todes regards such affordances and meanings as mediated by our bodies understood as the vehicles of our perceptual relatedness to the world.

In Todes’s terminology we operate with non-conceptual “bodily inferences” that conjoin our anticipation of experience to its actual occurrence (2001, 72); the anticipated nature of the hidden side of coffee cup, say, is fulfilled when the previously hidden side is actually experienced.¹¹ The structure of this anticipation is, for Todes, a bodily achievement not a function of habitual mental processes trained through brute repetition to react in particular ways to relevant stimuli. This is, then, allegedly a counterpart to Hume’s emphasis on mental inference, a kind of felt determination of the mind toward possessing and maintaining particular beliefs in the face of a suitable diet of instances.¹² Todes also suggests that there is another counterpart here, one that concerns ‘habit’.

The refinement of our perceptual skills, the refinement of our “poise” as Todes puts it, is a refinement of our anticipations and habits:

The field of our experience [can] endure only so long as we, by responsive action, can make it *habitable*: habitable, as our habitation, or dwelling place, *where* we live: and habit-able, as a place to which we can become *accustomed* as the determinately skilled percipients (marked by our past experience) we gradually create ourselves to be (2001, 81).

According to Todes this diachronic conception of experience is unavailable to Hume. Presumably, Todes has in mind the thin conception of experience that Hume discusses

¹⁰ Although ‘satisfaction’ is not a form of *terminus*. See Rouse (2005, 43).

¹¹ See also Husserl (1999).

¹² Recent accounts of Hume’s theory of belief emphasize the role of ‘stability’. See, for example, Loeb (2002).

in Book I of the *Treatise*. For Todes, Hume’s view culminates in eliminating the active body from experience, equating experience with the “visual point of view” of a “pure spectator” (2001, 6). Hume draws the “necessary though incredible” conclusion that experiences are, in fact, discrete instances and nothing about one of these instances implies anything about other experiences. Thus, Todes claims, according to Hume “there is no justification for believing that our experience is even likely to be ordered” (2001, 6). Todes argues that Hume cannot conceive of experience construed as a ‘life field’, the anticipatory structure and interconnected character of perceptions is undermined by a commitment to an atomistic model of empirical content. Such a model in Merleau-Ponty’s words (and which anticipate Sellars’s critique of ‘the given’) construes experience as an “instantaneous, dotlike impact” and thus cannot appreciate its holistic character (2002, 3).

But this raises a worry, apart from the fact that it would be a needlessly restrictive reading of Hume on experience. McDowell’s account of experience, for example, has emphasized the irreducible conceptuality of experience in order to avoid characterizing experience as a dotlike impact; such an impact could not account for how experience provides reasons and plays a role in grounding a world-view (McDowell 1996). This commits McDowell to a form of conceptualism about experience which has been the subject of much discussion in recent years.¹³ Particularly relevant for the present context is how conceptualism appears to run counter to a broadly phenomenological account of experience and how both conceptualism and phenomenology are critical of Hume’s atomistic empiricism.

McDowell’s conceptualism about the content of experience is partly motivated by the attempt to portray experience as meaningful and to show how it can provide an adequately rational constraint on our thinking. For Todes, and other phenomenologists, such an attempt overlooks a more basic and less intellectual way that we find phenomena, and the world at large, meaningful. Phenomenologists have long insisted that meaningful experience need not presuppose the possession and exercise of concepts; the meaning and world-disclosing character of experience can be perfectly well enjoyed at a nonconceptual level, where that involves what Dreyfus has described as our being “absorbed in coping” with the world, not distanced from it

¹³ See, for example, the essays collected in Schear (2013).

through the critical employment of concepts (e.g., Dreyfus 2005; 2007a; 2007b; 2013). Dreyfus argues that conceptualists such as Davidson and McDowell do not describe perceptual objects “as they are in themselves” but rather focus their attention on highly specialized cases of ‘judgements of detached thought’. Conceptualists then construe such detachment as if it were the primary or perhaps the only way that our experience of the world can be made intelligible (Dreyfus 2001, xvi). Dreyfus interprets Todes as showing how, through an account of the nature of our embodiment, the nonconceptual character of experience is in fact presupposed by intelligibility in the conceptualist’s sense.

According to conceptualists Hume offers an account of experience that tries to explain its meaning and reason giving capacity yet in a way that presupposes no concepts or understanding (Sellars 1997, 33).¹⁴ Such a view, they suggest, is incoherent. A phenomenologist might emphasize the non-conceptual nature of our embodiment in order to undercut their opponent’s insistence that concepts and the theoretical, detached understanding they enable, are primary. But phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty and Todes regard Hume’s account of experience to be impoverished, and thus Hume’s view and the account of experience provided by a phenomenological account exploit different senses of ‘non-conceptual’.¹⁵ Yet criticizing Hume for ‘dissecting’ experience and providing an impoverished account has only limited success; the criticism only has purchase on the account of experience as described in the early parts of the *Treatise*. Our experiences at the level of “behaviour in company, in affairs, and in [our] pleasures” cannot even make sense, let alone successfully explained, if experience is characterized as a dotlike impact. Recall that the *explananda* in the science of man incorporates our experience at the level of social interaction and of our ordinary commerce with the world, in Stroud’s words “what people actually think, feel and do in human life” (1977, 222). When Hume *does* dissect experience into “instances”, he does so in the service of producing a ‘philosophical’, abstract analysis. But, as Hume explains, such an account is part – not the grounds – of a wider characterization of human nature.

¹⁴ See Allison (2008) for a discussion of the relation between Hume’s account of experience and belief and how Sellars’s characterizes the “logical space of reasons”.

¹⁵ On Hume’s impoverished conception of experience, see Bell and McGinn (1990), and Stroud (2006).

Focusing exclusively on the impoverished conception of experience is bound up with interpreting Hume's concerns as primarily epistemological, specifically sceptical. For instance, Todes claims that what moves us toward and around in the world are our 'desires' or 'needs' which are constrained by nature:

Our desires are somewhat restricted by the facts, which eliminate unrealistic desires. But what can be countenanced as a perceptual fact is also limited by our indispensable human needs. Hume would agree that the percipient and his impressions would cease to be, if his needs were inadequately met. But for Hume this would be no more than an (unjustifiable) empirical generalization (2001, 81).

But the qualification "no more than" is misleading and arises because of reading Hume as primarily a sceptic. Todes quotes a very famous moment at the end of Book I of the *Treatise* where Hume reaches out to Nature to help disperse the clouds of scepticism:

Most fortunately, it happens that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, Nature herself suffices for that purpose ... I dine, I play backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when I return to these speculations, they appear so cold, so strain'd, so ridiculous (1978, 269).¹⁶

Todes describes this passage as an example of Hume's recognition that his own philosophical system is inadequate (2001, 87). But, in my view, this appeal to Nature is not just the *result* of an epistemological investigation it is rather part of the condition of any such investigation. Part of Hume's aim was to illuminate the taken-for-granted sense of what it is to be a human being, a sense presupposed by questions of how our beliefs are or are not justified, warranted, and so forth, a sense elucidated by the cautious observation of common life.

¹⁶ Note how in both this passage, and the one slightly earlier in the conclusion of Book I where Hume describes himself as a "strange uncouth monster", the role of other people is fundamental. Firstly, in the fragmentation of interpersonal relations ("utterly abandon'd and disconsolate ... no one will hearken to me. Every one keeps at a distance ...") and then, secondly, as part of what restores a more agreeable state.

I am not recommending that we should simply ignore how Hume frames his epistemology in apparently anti-social terms, especially during Book 1 of the *Treatise*.¹⁷ The process of delving into one’s private supply of perceptions and experiences in the attempt to identify the relevant rational relations between mental contents is an important feature of Hume’s overall project. But I have argued that care is needed over the interpretation of ‘experience’. I am suggesting that an alternative and perfectly consistent meaning of experience and thus what it implies for the rational status of our impressions, ideas and beliefs, should not be ignored either – an alternative which is irreducibly interpersonal. Hume’s epistemology need not be construed in exclusively individualistic terms.

Emphasizing Hume’s interpersonal epistemology, his social science, is a familiar aspect of some interpretations such as Baier’s for example. She writes that “Hume’s naturalism in epistemology takes human nature as the nature closest to hand, and takes our nature to be social and passionate, before it is cognitive” (Baier 1991, 28-9).¹⁸ My point here is that both aspects of Hume’s epistemology, the social and the solipsistic (if the distinction is best drawn in these terms) can be characterized naturalistically. The science of man, when focused on our wider non-solipsistic experience, delivers insights about ourselves and our epistemic situation as irreducibly practical creatures.¹⁹

CONCLUDING REMARKS

If Baier is right, Hume

was initiating not the science (in our sense) of psychology, either introspective or experimental, but a broader discipline of reflection on human nature, into which Charles Darwin and Michel Foucault, as much as William James and Sigmund Freud, can be seen to belong (1991, 25).

¹⁷ As Baier puts it, throughout Part 4 of Book 1 of the *Treatise* Hume had “sailed a one-person ship, albeit in an ocean where other manned ships were clearly visible” (1991, 3).

¹⁸ Baier cites Gilles Deleuze’s work as suggesting this kind of view in his work from 1953, translated as *Empiricism as Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume’s Theory of Human Nature*: “Hume is a moralist and a sociologist, before being a psychologist” (1991, 21).

¹⁹ At the start of the first *Enquiry*, Hume identifies the science of human nature with “moral philosophy” as opposed to ‘natural philosophy’ (1975, 5).

I suggest that the reading of Hume developed here accounts for how his naturalistic epistemology forms part of this broad discipline, part of a systematic reflection on human nature: a human science. A common reading of Hume is that his naturalism is expressed in the first place as a commitment to a conception of the world as disenchanted. This, in my view, is incorrect as a description of Hume's naturalism and it has a distorting effect on how we might understand Hume's aims in the *Treatise* and elsewhere. What I have been arguing is that Hume's naturalism does not proceed by starting with a set of metaphysical commitments and then moves to consider how to explain our practices in light of them. Rather, Hume's science of man is principally a study of human nature as articulated in the common course of our existence.

Hume's project, according to Lewis, seems to assume an austere metaphysics, an assumption that others such as McDowell take to indicate a primary commitment to a disenchanted conception of the world. I have argued that Hume's naturalism involves more than this, a wider naturalism that has been overlooked by both scientific naturalists and also their critics. Whether or not Hume's alleged ontological austerity deserves approval or criticism, that aspect of Hume's naturalism would need to be singled out and extracted from its place alongside other aspects of the broader naturalist attitude that I have sought to illuminate. There must be conceptual space for naturalisms other than what has generally been taken as scientific naturalism, and being inclusive with respect to naturalism is itself a proper lesson of what a more liberal naturalism teaches.²⁰ Hume's naturalism does not incorporate an attitude toward our experience that attempts to 'locate' it in some prior characterization of the world, a characterization supplied by science. Whilst it is true to say that an important element in Hume's approach was the appeal to psychological explanations of the content and significance of experience, the restrictive reading of experience and of the naturalist background overextends the role assigned to psychology.

If we consider Book I of the *Treatise* we are, compared to other passages, presented with the solipsistic, detached, intellectual engagement with sceptical questions. But elsewhere in (Book II and III, and in the *Enquiries*) we have the return of what Baier describes as "flesh and blood persons" (1991, 138) and the redeployment of a non-scientistic sort of naturalism. Hume is not obviously the founding father of

²⁰ See De Caro and McArthur 2010, 9.

scientism and, moreover, he has more to offer the phenomenological tradition than has previously been recognized.²¹ McDowell has characterized the attitude of scientific naturalism to involve compensating for the effects of a scientific investigator, perhaps discounting “even his humanity” as he puts it (1998, 181). Whatever the desirability or plausibility of such an attitude, it should be clear that Hume does not hold it. Hume explicitly places our humanity at the very centre of a naturalist standpoint: “Human Nature is the only science of man” (1978, 273). If we overlook this then Hume’s naturalism will be misunderstood. The idea that Hume’s naturalism only, or even primarily, amounts to a science-inspired metaphysics is a mistake. Whilst it may be granted that the creed of scientific naturalism is mistaken, it is just as mistaken to regard Hume as its prophet.²²

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²¹ Although, writing in 1929, Husserl wrote of Hume’s unrecognized “greatness” since, according to Husserl, Hume was “the first to grasp the *concrete problem* of transcendental philosophy” (Husserl 1969, 256). See also Salmon (1929).

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