Hume and Liberal Naturalism

Benedict Smith

The work of David Hume (1711-1776) is regarded as one of the most influential articulations of a naturalistic approach in philosophy, interpreted by many as a key inspiration for naturalist projects in a range of areas. His *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739/40), *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) and *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751),[1] amongst other works, have been interpreted as resolute expressions of a philosophical attitude guided by the methods, metaphysics and epistemology of natural science. As is often noted Hume's naturalistic method seems evident from the subtitle of the *Treatise*: 'Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects'. Hume's ambition was to investigate the foundations of our thought and practice with the aim of explaining our beliefs, ideas, emotions and behaviour in ways that rendered them intelligible by science. But characterizing the role of science and naturalism in Hume's philosophy is not straightforward. According to some readings Hume's stated task of understanding ourselves and our ideas involved placing relevant phenomena into the explanatory frameworks of the natural sciences, an expression of orthodox philosophical naturalism. But other readings emphasize quite different aspects to Hume's naturalism and clarifying these shows the close connections Hume's approach has with more 'liberal' forms of naturalism.

One of the many things that makes Hume's views distinctive is how he attempted to incorporate our rational capacities into a relevant naturalistic account. Our capacity for judgement as well as our emotional and biological drives are by "an absolute and uncontroulable necessity" determined by nature (T SBN 183). Thus rationality is not conceived as a faculty radically distinct from our more animal characteristics as it would be by, say, a Cartesian perspective. Hume's naturalism, understood one way, insists that every aspect of our bodily and cognitive lives, as well our everyday interpersonal interaction including moral thought and agency, is explicable as phenomena within the scientifically described world. Under a particularly austere version of this interpretation Hume's naturalism is a form of scientism: roughly, the dogmatic assertion that the natural sciences have complete and exclusive authority over what can be said to exist and the methods by which we can achieve genuine knowledge. However, there are elements at the core of Hume's naturalism that

[1] In referring to these works below I will use 'T' to refer to the *Treatise* followed by the page number contained in the edition prepared by L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch abbreviated to 'SBN'. And similarly with the *Enquiry* referred to as 'E'.

motivate a quite different understanding of his work, elements that situate him amongst other liberal naturalists and as a *therapeutic* liberal naturalist in some respects. In the next section I lay out how Hume's view is understood as a version of scientific naturalism before turning to those elements that suggest a different interpretation. Overall I discuss the relation between two cardinal themes in Hume's philosophy, naturalism and scepticism, focusing on the *Treatise* and *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.

1. Hume as scientific naturalist?

Interpretations of Hume have often presented him as articulating a clearly recognizable form of scientific naturalism. By this I mean a broadly familiar commitment to the priority of the natural sciences: philosophical inquiry should be constrained by the metaphysics, epistemology and methodology of science. As contemporary proponent Alex Rosenberg puts it: "Naturalism is the philosophical theory that treats science as our most reliable source of knowledge and scientific method as the most effective route to knowledge" (2013: 32). And, at least to many modern readers, the way that Hume describes his project in the opening pages of the *Treatise* is a clear expression of this kind of naturalism. There Hume explains that a proper "science of man" or "science of human nature" will provide explanations of our ideas and behaviour, a process founded on "experience and observation" (T SBN xvi).

Some have interpreted Hume's naturalism as principally a metaphysical commitment about the nature of the world. For example, David Lewis describes Hume's world as "a vast mosaic of local matters of particular fact, just one little thing after another" (1986: ix) and John McDowell writes that "[t]he tendency of the scientific outlook is to purge the world of meaning" describing Hume as the "prophet" of this tendency (1998: 174).[2] Such a scientistic outlook leaves the world 'disenchanted' in Max Weber's sense and leads to a conception of nature as an "ineffable lump" (McDowell 1998: 178). That characterization of Hume's naturalism is, I think, a view that is possible only from a contemporary perspective. Hume describes his project as one that takes human nature as continuous with the natural world, not as somehow standing over against a disinterested objective reality or one that seeks to expel meaning or normativity from the world. The aim of Hume's science of man was to illuminate our ideas, thoughts, feelings and agency. It is difficult to understand how these normative aspects of our nature would relate to or be contained 'in' a world conceived as a disenchanted normless lump implying that human beings, if we wanted to account for the relevant kinds of normativity, would need to be "enchanted wholly from within" to use Bilgrami's phrase (2010: 31).

[2] See Smith (2016: 311).

Instead of starting with a conception of the world as devoid of meaning and then conducting his science of man against that background, Hume describes the science of man in the following way. After reflecting on the limitations to the science of man, noting that the "ultimate principles" of human nature cannot ever be known, Hume tells us that:

> We must … glean up our experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life, and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures (T SNB xviii-xix).

The question of the starting point for Hume's naturalism is important. In the above passage from the introduction to the *Treatise*, Hume emphasizes that the science of man takes as its subject matter human life – our ordinary social existence and our ordinary everyday beliefs. Furthermore Hume writes that "the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences" (T SBN xvi). This emphasis, however, is problematically related to some of Hume's other philosophical commitments, particularly his empiricism. On one view Hume's philosophical method began, as it were, with what can be detected on the inside of a subject's mental life, the internally accessible objects – 'perceptions' in Hume's sense – that a person can allegedly identify by introspection. This partly expressed Hume's imagistic theory of the relation between impressions and ideas and the subsequent psychological activities that supposedly provide us with an intelligible world.

According to Stroud the 'naturalism' of the 20th and 21st Centuries is characterized by an attempt to explain the processes whereby we come to understand and know the things we do, even if that attempt makes use of the kind of knowledge that we are trying to explain, thus taking for granted forms of understanding that are then articulated in naturalistic terms (Stroud 2016: 23). And the attempt is not restricted to a naturalistic conception of knowledge. An influential trend in contemporary philosophy seeks to naturalize all aspects of our cognitive and experiential lives including meaning and intentionality. Stroud takes such a naturalistic project to be "continuous with" Hume's conception of his science of man and at least indirectly inspired by it (Stroud 2016: 23). However, Stroud indicates ways that Hume's naturalism contrasts with contemporary versions in the resources that are admissible at the outset of naturalistic enquiry. Hume "started with what he thought human beings start with as knowers: what they perceive in sense-experience". The content of what knowers have in sense experience are transient atoms: "from these materials alone, Hume thought … human beings construct their elaborate conception of the world and their place in it" (Stroud 2016: 23). So this emphasizes a constructive natural psychological process that begins from what is given in sense-experience. The 'world' on this account is generated out of mental particulars.

Hume's empiricist view is arguably unconvincing and stands in a difficult relation to other components in Hume's philosophy. But I will put these tensions, important as they are, to one side. What is relevant is the aligning of Hume's naturalism with a reductive form of psychological explanation. The alignment is encouraged by a modern view of what philosophical naturalism amounts to, one expressed by Quine's proposal to naturalize epistemology: our task ought to be explaining the processes whereby we come to believe the things we do and that, according to Quine, was the proper domain of psychology with Hume taken as an early champion of this approach (Quine 1969).

But the psychological-naturalist reading of Hume ignores other dimensions to how the science of man is characterized and thus other dimensions to his naturalism. As Annette Baier has observed, for example, in setting out his science of man:

> 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 (Baier 1991: 25).[3]

Baier emphasizes the interpersonal dimension of Hume's work, not in the sense that Hume was just interested in trying to *apply* the discoveries of the science of human nature to the interpersonal world, but rather as regarding that world, our world, as the context within which that science can operate. Yet the social word as well as other taken-for-granted aspects of human life such as belief in the persistence of a self, the belief that ordinary everyday objects exist when unperceived, that events are causally related, and so on, can come under the scrutiny of reason and disturbed from their usual place in our lives. It is this critical scrutiny of our natural thought and agency that is an origin of scepticism, and I will come back to say a bit more about that and its relation to Hume's liberal naturalism below. In any case it is by no means obvious what Hume's naturalism amounts to. But it is misguided to portray it as a primary commitment to a disenchanted conception of the world or as exclusively an early form of introspectionist psychology.

As stated Hume's overarching naturalism aimed to incorporate our rational capacities as well as other kinds of behaviour: "Nature … has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel" as he puts it in the *Treatise* (T SBN 183). A core theme in the *Treatise* is the project of clarifying the

[3] In making this point Baier refers the reader to the work of Gilles Deleuze who, in his 1953 book on Hume *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, writes that "Hume is a moralist and a sociologist, before being a psychologist … one must be a moralist, sociologist, or historian *before* being a psychologist, *in order to be* a psychologist" (1991: 21-22). See Smith (2016) for further discussion.

epistemic status of our beliefs. According to Hume rational reflection aimed at uncovering the justificatory grounds of, for example, causal belief and inductive inference, reveals these to be entirely without rational justification. Through reflection we detach ourselves from our beliefs in the sense that we acknowledge their unjustifiable status yet the detachment cannot be total. In some sense we remain existentially committed to them. By this I mean something similar to Norman Kemp Smith's influential interpretation of Hume's naturalism in which he describes our "natural beliefs" as those that we possess irrespective of the consequences of rational scrutiny and without the use of reason or evidence (Kemp Smith 1949). This sets up an important tension between the conclusions of philosophical reflection and the fact that the "current of nature" nevertheless determines us to think and act according to these beliefs (T SBN 269). The tension is a difficult one to resolve, at least initially. In Book 1 of the *Treatise* Hume warned of the dangers of "intense reflection":

> [S]ceptical doubt, both with respect to reason and the senses, is a malady, which can never be radically cur'd, but must return upon us every moment, however we may chace it away … sceptical doubt arises naturally from a profound and intense reflection on those subjects, it always encreases, the farther we carry our reflections, whether in opposition or conformity to it (T SBN 218).

By the conclusion of Book 1 the malady had become something resembling the symptoms of a psychiatric illness:

> The *intense* view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another. Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? Whose favour shall I court, and whose anger must I dread? What beings surround me? and on whom have I any influence, or who have any influence on me? I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, inviron'd with the deepest darkness, and utterly depriv'd of the use of every member and faculty (T SBN 268-69).

Immediately after this passage Hume writes:

> Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hour's amusement, I wou'd return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther (T SBN 269).

A reintegration into ordinary life from a period of detached spectatorial reflection enables us to re-inhabit, so to speak, our ordinary natural beliefs providing a form of antidote to scepticism. The subject matter of Hume's naturalism is human nature, and the content of the science of man is what we in fact do, feel and think in ordinary life. As Strawson notes there (at least) two Humes: the sceptic and the naturalist (Strawson 1985: 12). Scepticism emerges as a result of 'intense reflection' on the rational standing of our ideas, and nature, including human nature, is articulated partly as a way to demonstrate the status of scepticism. That is to say that, for Hume, getting clearer about human nature shows the proper place that detached reflection has in our lives.[4] In my view this is what indicates Hume's therapeutic liberal naturalism. To anticipate: Hume's naturalism incorporates detached philosophical thought thus not regarding it as a rival competitor perspective but as one expression of the diverse kinds of agency that constitute human beings in the world.

2. Hume as Liberal Naturalist

'Liberal naturalism' has been characterized in a number of ways, emphasizing different forms that the process of liberalization could take.[5] A common factor in the different articulations of liberal naturalism is an acknowledgement of the diversity of scientific understanding and, crucially, to give a persuasive account of normative phenomena that are essential to our thought, discourse and action.[6] Such an account, however, could be in tension with an understanding of what is constituted by 'scientific understanding'. If this means assuming something like a disenchanted conception of the world, then what we are aiming to understand will exclude normative phenomena. And I take it as

[4] Hume's attempt to demonstrate the limits of scepticism and reason is an important theme in Mounce's interpretation of Hume's naturalism (e.g. 1999: 15-16).
[5] For previous examples of the ways that liberal naturalism has been motivated and defended see the essays collected in de Caro and Macarthur (2004) and (2010).
[6] See, for example, de Caro and Macarthur (2010: 9).

uncontroversial that at least a core aspect of Hume's ambition was to account for normative phenomena such as our striving for and achieving knowledge and understanding.

The label 'liberal naturalism' was first used by John McDowell in 1999 to articulate a form of naturalism that contrasted with what he called "restrictive naturalism" (2009: 261-262). This contrast is aimed, partly, to acknowledge that thinking and knowing cannot be reduced to or incorporated into how modern science conceives of what is natural. According to McDowell the success of modern science can tempt us to equate what is natural with what can be exclusively understood by subsuming phenomena under scientific laws of nature, the 'realm of law' (McDowell 1996: 73). But for Sellarsian reasons thinking and knowing are achievements that are intelligible only in terms articulated within a "logical space of reasons", a normative space that contrasts with the realm of law (Sellars 1997: 76). So if we insist on equating what is natural with what is intelligible only in terms of the realm of law then thinking and knowing will be conceived of as supernatural. But regarding thought and knowledge as supernatural is unattractive as well as deeply confused. To avoid this, McDowell suggests, we should regard thinking and knowing as "part of our way of being animals" (2009: 262). This way of being animals, for mature humans at least, incorporates our rational capacities. Our agency is infused with rationality along with, for conceptualists like McDowell, our perceptual capacities. The point here is not to pretend that Hume had a similar view of the role of concepts in experience but to press the broader idea that both McDowell and Hume insist on the non-supernatural character of agency and thought. The idea that these are not supernatural might seem entirely unremarkable. But from a scientific naturalist perspective what is needed to make sense of this is to provide a naturalistic account of thinking and knowing whilst respecting their irreducibly normative character and the worldly context, including interpersonal relations, that conditions thought and agency in the first place. And that is an impossible task if the relevant kind of naturalism can respect only what is intelligible in causal-explanatory terms.

To avoid supernaturalism about thinking and knowing we should be careful about what we take the natural sciences to have achieved. According to McDowell "what the modern scientific revolution yielded was clarity about the realm of law, and that is not the same thing as clarity *about nature*" (McDowell 2009: 261). So being a naturalist about knowing and thinking in a liberal sense opposes reducing or translating these achievements into the realm of law; a liberal naturalist can point to the surely incontrovertible fact that thinking and knowing are amongst the many things that we do, part of "our mode of living" in McDowell's words (McDowell 2009: 261). There is nothing supernatural about thinking and knowing and their naturalistic character cannot be made clear by understanding them in terms of the realm of law or somehow as operations in a disenchanted world. One of the key elements in McDowell's presentation of liberal naturalism is the attempt to steer past

what might otherwise be an intractable bifurcation between our being part of nature and our exercising rationality. And this is clearly a Humean aim as well.

A liberal naturalist like a scientific naturalist denies supernatural phenomena including forces, objects and agencies which are typically invoked by theistic accounts of the world. A difference, however, is that for the liberal naturalist what is deemed to be the province of the natural is not determined by only what natural science tells us. For the liberal naturalist persons, for example, are a proper object of reflection and understanding. Persons cannot be understood except as regarding them as embedded and engaged in a meaningful world with other persons, amongst many other aspects. Persons are not, I am assuming, supernatural but just like the supernatural forces, objects and agencies invoked by the world's religions, persons would be excluded from the scientifically described world. Liberal naturalism seeks to account for non-scientific, non-supernatural forms of understanding and the worldly features to which those forms are answerable. Hume's contribution to liberal naturalism lies in his rejection of supernatural explanations and his commitment to the science of human nature as a form of enquiry that takes 'common life' as its subject matter. Our common life is constituted by a set of beliefs and commitments about the existence of the external world, about the self, about other persons and of course much else besides. These beliefs and the things they are about are not supernatural but understanding them is not intelligible by trying to translate them into the framework of scientific naturalism. The beliefs and phenomena in question are irreducibly normative and non-supernatural. That makes liberal naturalism an appropriate perspective from which to understand them.

H.O. Mounce has drawn a distinction between a metaphysical and an epistemological way to characterize Hume's naturalism (Mounce 1999: 11-12). Metaphysical naturalism means something along the lines of what McDowell assumed when describing Hume as the prophet of disenchantment (McDowell 1998: 174), the scientistic idea that reality is identical to nature understood through the categories of natural science. By 'epistemological naturalism' Mounce does not mean a Quinean view of giving a account of thinking and knowing in descriptive psychological terms. What is meant, rather, is the idea that our human nature, the target of the science of man, is constituted by our being foundationally and pre-philosophically related to the world through forms of thought, feeling and action. These relations are not the outcome of reasoning and inference or some kind of explicit cognitive achievement but are *presupposed* by those things (Mounce 1999: 4). Hence there is a way that we inhabit the world that is primordially meaningful and that makes use of forms of understanding. In part Hume's naturalism aims to capture these pre-rational relations and to that extent shares its form with themes in Wittgenstein.[7] In a way that runs counter to elements in his

[7] See, for example, Pears (1990: xii) and Smith (2018).

empiricism, Hume's naturalism understood as epistemological in Mounce's sense emphasizes how our knowledge has its source not merely in individualistic experience and inference from it. Such experience and reasoning is only possible because we have a world already "*given* to us in *natural* beliefs" (Mounce 1999: 2). We cannot generate the world and what it contains from private experience and inference. So this suggests a quite different naturalistic starting point to that described by Stroud above. Recall: the idea was that Hume started with what he thought human beings start with as knowers, what they perceive in sense-experience. Stroud is right to say that Hume started with persons as knowers. But in my view what that means implies a quite different point of departure than imagining subjects of experience being affected by sensory input and constructing a world from fleeting momentary impressions. Again for somewhat Sellarsian reasons, to start as a knower is to start already within a world-involving normative context, a position that can be characterized in naturalistic terms although not those of orthodox scientific naturalism. From what Hume tells about how he characterizes the science his science of man it is persons engaged in the world and with others that is a principal focus despite the presence of his contrasting empiricist commitments.

3. Philosophy and Hume's therapeutic liberal naturalism

When Hume frames his science of man as resting on the cautious observation of common life he is not proposing that we somehow step outside nature, as if the relevant observational stance is somehow detached from the natural world. He is proposing that, at least at an initial stage, we step outside of custom and ordinary experience. He cannot be proposing that we step outside nature for there is no such place. Rational reflection and adopting a detached critical stance is one expression of our human nature and the process of coming to see how detached reflection is related to common life is an important theme in Hume's work. In the *Enquiry* Hume suggests that a scepticism that is "*antecedent* to all study and philosophy", a form of extreme Cartesian doubt, is impossible for us. Were this doubt attainable it would be "entirely incurable; and no reasoning could ever bring us to a state of assurance and conviction upon any subject". But Hume does suggest that:

> [T]his species of scepticism, when more moderate, may be understood in a very reasonable sense, and is a necessary preparative to the study of philosophy, by preserving a proper impartiality in our judgments, and weaning our mind from all those prejudices, which we may have imbibed from education or rash opinion (E SBN 150).

So this is a 'scepticism' geared to help the process of responsible belief-formation, not as a strategy or a set of judgements aimed at undermining claims to knowledge.

Common life involves a pre-rational belief that our senses provide access to a real, independent world:

> It seems evident, that men are carried, by a natural instinct or prepossession, to repose faith in their senses; and that, without any reasoning, or even almost before the use of reason, we always suppose an external universe, which depends not on our perception, but would exist, though we and every sensible creature were absent or annihilated (E SBN 151).

"But", Hume continues, "this universal and primary opinion of all men is soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy" (E SBN 152). Philosophical reflection teaches us that, in fact, what we have access to are only ever "perceptions in the mind". So the natural realism of common life is in tension with a philosophically informed phenomenalist anti-realism. Yet this philosophical position cannot itself be defended by reason. Thus "philosophy finds herself extremely embarrassed". Natural beliefs do not withstand critical assessment yet neither does the philosophical stance itself: "to justify this pretended philosophical system, by a chain of clear and convincing argument, or even any appearance of argument, exceeds the power of all human capacity" (E SBN 152). External world scepticism resulting from philosophical reflection is "contrary to natural instinct" but that cannot be a settled perspective, partly because the scepticism itself "carries no rational evidence with it" (E SBN 155).

As already described in the *Treatise*, the sceptical attitude arising from philosophical reflection is undermined by engagement in ordinary life and thought. Hume writes in the *Enquiry* that "[t]he great subverter of … the excessive principles of scepticism, is action, and employment, and the occupations of common life" (E SBN 158-9). What does the subverting, then, is not any particular argument or operation of reason. Rational reflection produced the excessive scepticism in the first place. Our *acting* is what subverts scepticism. So if this is a form of refutation then it will be of a distinctive type; not the outcome of reasoning but an embodied and enacted repudiation of philosophical conclusions.

Engaging in the affairs of common life is not just a distraction from philosophy, a psychologically necessary relief from the disturbing predicament brought on by philosophical reflections. Common life has also a *normatively constraining role* with regard to philosophical activity. Common life is not a disenchanted life. But it is not enchanted wholly from within, to borrow Bilgrami's phrase again, occurring somehow within a pre-established and disenchanted world. And

neither is it a way of living that lacks all critical resource; it constrains philosophy not just because we cannot exist as sceptics and are thus necessarily propelled back into our everyday mindless routines. Rather, ordinary life shows us the limits of philosophical reflection and thus reveals its character in more perspicuous terms.[8] Excessive scepticism seems, quite literally, pointless: "the chief and most confounding objection to excessive scepticism, [is] that no durable good can ever result from it … We need only ask such a sceptic, *What his meaning is? And what he proposes by all these curious researches?* He is immediately at a loss, and knows not what to answer." (E 159-60). But excessive scepticism is not simply impotent and ultimately useless. It is by working through excessive scepticism that a more "moderate" scepticism emerges: "a more *mitigated* scepticism … which may be both durable and useful, and which may, in part, be the result of this … excessive scepticism". And crucially for the point I am trying to make here the "undistinguished doubts" of excessive scepticism "are, in some measure, corrected by common sense and reflection" (E SBN 161). So in order for excessive scepticism to be "subverted" and "corrected" common life must be able to apply normative pressure on the conclusions of philosophical thought. And the relation between common life and mitigated scepticism is mutually illuminating:

> Those who have a propensity to philosophy, will still continue their researches; because they reflect, that, besides the immediate pleasure, attending such an occupation, philosophical decisions are nothing but the reflections of common life, methodized and corrected. But they will never be tempted to go beyond common life, so long as they consider the imperfection of those faculties which they employ, their narrow reach, and their inaccurate operations (E SBN 162).

By the end of the *Enquiry* Hume describes a situation in which a person who has passed through the "amazement and confusion" (E SBN 160) of excessive scepticism, the unconstrained application of philosophical scrutiny to our beliefs, can reach a way of thinking "both durable and useful" by recognizing the mutually illuminating character of common life and philosophy (E SBN 161). Excessive scepticism becomes mitigated by utilizing an insight about the limitations of critical reflection, an insight that is provided by an enlightened attitude towards our ordinary beliefs constitutive of common life. In some sense this captures a process of naturalizing philosophical activity though not of course by making philosophy a chapter of psychology in Quine's sense.

[8] The theme of Hume's naturalism revealing the limits of reason and human understanding is important to Mounce' s account. See, for example, Mounce (1999: 22-23).

Hume's liberal naturalism is expressed in the attempt to understand reason and rational reflection as part of our natural mode of living; the transformation from excessive sceptical disintegration to mitigated scepticism "comes from nature alone" as Stroud puts it (2016: 31). It is this sense, then, that I think reading Hume as a therapeutic liberal naturalist is appropriate. All I mean by therapeutic here is that idea that through entirely natural processes we come to a form of understanding of both philosophical activity and of our ordinary "daily practice and experience" (E SBN 162). This understanding is the result of seeing our common life anew, an understanding achieved by, partially, employing reason; we need to inhabit the "amazement and confusion" of excessive scepticism reached through rational reflection as a stage on the way to understanding. The transition from that state to one that is more "durable and useful" is not the direct outcome of reason but of an insight once we come to see that the content and significance of our ordinary lives "subvert" and "correct" the conclusions of philosophical reflection.[9]

The doctrines of liberal naturalism do not form a precisely delineated set. But among the significant themes is a view about the perspective from which naturalistic enquiry ought to begin, or the context within which naturalism can proceed. If proponents of liberal naturalism are right, orthodox scientific naturalism assumes that, for any given phenomena to be regarded as genuinely part of the world and for us to secure genuine knowledge of that phenomena, the metaphysics and methods of natural science are privileged. In his presentation of philosophical (or scientific) naturalism Rosenberg claims that what he calls the "interpretive disciplines" such as history and other humanities, whilst important, cannot provide "real knowledge" since only scientific naturalism is able to do that (2013: 41). It is of course no part of liberal naturalism to deny that scientific naturalism is a vital source of knowledge and understanding. But liberal naturalism does deny that this is to be regarded as the only or the best form of understanding irrespective of what our subject matter is. Cases where the subject matter of what we are trying to understand cannot even be identified without preserving its normative character exemplify the issue. Hume's science of human nature adopts different perspectives and one of these perspectives takes human thinkers and agents as engaged in ordinary life and frames that subject matter as basic and irreducible. Human life is also the context within which philosophical reflection is initiated and, as Hume explains, to which it returns in some sense. Hume's liberal naturalism, then, sheds light on the character of ordinary life and of philosophical reflection.

[9] This transition is emphasized in more detail and framed narrative terms in Livingstone's *Hume's Philosophy of Common Life* (1984: 28-31). See also Stroud (2016) for an account of the move from excessive to mitigated scepticism.

Conclusion

In the opening sections of the *Enquiry* Hume notes how the "mere philosopher" and the "mere ignorant" lead an equally impoverished life (E SBN 8). Hume proposes that another way of living is preferable, one illuminated by a form naturalistic enquiry. Hume writes that we are "reasonable", "social" and "active" beings and that "nature has pointed out a mixed kind of life as most suitable to human race. Indulge your passion for science, says she, but let your science be human" (E SBN 8-9).[10] The diversity of human nature as revealed through Hume's science of man suggests that we need diverse means and methods for understanding ourselves. It would seriously distort the character of Hume's philosophy quite generally and his naturalism in particular if we insist that the only naturalism present in Hume's work is a forerunner of scientific naturalism. Hume's naturalism is more liberal than some interpretations have supposed and appreciating this can enhance our understanding both of Hume and of the character and prospects of liberal naturalism.

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[10] See also Smith (2018: 256).

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