

# Hume's Real Riches

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**Abstract:** Hume describes his own “open, social, and cheerful humour” as “a turn of mind which it is more happy to possess, than to be born to an estate of ten thousand a year.” Why does he value a cheerful character so highly? I argue that, for Hume, cheerfulness has two aspects—one manifests as mirth in social situations, and the other as steadfastness against life’s misfortunes. This second aspect is of special interest to Hume in that it safeguards the other virtues. And its connection with the first aspect helps explain how it differs from Stoic tranquility. For Hume, I argue, philosophy has a modest role in promoting human happiness by preserving cheerfulness.

Keywords: Hume, cheerfulness, virtue, skepticism, Stoicism, tranquility

## 1. A valuable disposition

In the posthumously published autobiographical essay “My Own Life,” Hume describes his own “open, social, and cheerful humour” as “a turn of mind which it is more happy to possess, than to be born to an estate of ten thousand a year” (MOL 21, 9, Mil xl, xxxvi).<sup>1</sup> The context helps us see why. Hume says that the autobiography is “little more than the History of [his] writings,” but the focus is on their successes or, more often, failures in public reception (MOL 1, Mil xxxi). Apart from the *Political Discourses*, which he deems “the only work of [his] that was successful on first publication,” Hume’s writings are described as receiving either silence or derision upon initial printing (MOL 10, 16, Mil xxxvi, xxxviii). His *Treatise*, for example, “fell dead-born from the press,” while his cherished second *Enquiry* “came unnoticed and unobserved into the world.” Worse yet, the *Natural History of Religion* suffered “a pamphlet against it” full of “illiberal petulance, arrogance, and scurrility” and the first volume of the *History* was assailed by “English, Scotch, and Irish, Whig and Tory, churchman and secretary, free thinker and religionist, patriot and courtier, united in their rage against the man, who had presumed to shed a generous tear for the fate of Charles I. and the Earl of Strafford” (MOL 6, 10, 13, 11, Mil xxxiv, xxxvi, xxxvii, xxxvii). Though by the end of his life, Hume had seen a favorable shift in public reception, the overall impression he paints is of a life “not such as to be the object of envy” (MOL 1, Mil xxi).<sup>2</sup>

Why does Hume go into so much detail about his failures? The answer, I think, is not just that he wanted to pass on to posterity an accurate account of his reception, nor that he was enacting a false modesty, nor yet that he was exacting a bitter revenge.<sup>3</sup> It is instead to provide a backdrop to exhibit a feature of his character that he valued more than fame or fortune.<sup>4</sup> Many

commentators have drawn attention to Hume's "love of literary fame" which he here describes as his "ruling passion," but miss that his point in invoking it is to emphasize that even this persistent passion "never soured [his] temper, notwithstanding [his] frequent disappointments" (MOL 21, Mil xl).<sup>5</sup> The reason it did not, apparently, was the very temper itself. Even after the disaster of the *Treatise's* reception, Hume, "being naturally of a cheerful and sanguine temper,...very soon recovered the blow, and prosecuted with great ardor [his] studies in the country" (MOL 6, Mil xxxiv). Hume was not discouraged, or at least not for long: "Such is the force of natural temper, that these disappointments made little or no impression on me" (MOL 9, Mil xxxv). This very same temper allows Hume to report that, even in mortal illness, he "never suffered a moment's abatement of [his] spirits," but continued to "possess the same ardour as ever in study, and the same gaiety in company" (MOL 20, Mil xl).

In valuing a cheerful temperament so highly, Hume agrees with his imagined Sceptic in his essay "The Sceptic." This essay appears after "The Epicurean," "The Stoic," and "The Platonist" in a quartet of essays in which Hume impersonates characters associated with these four Hellenistic sects and exhibits their different perspectives on human happiness and the proper object of the will. Hume's Sceptic denies that any one pursuit could make all people happy. She instead declares: "To be happy, the passion must be chearful and gay, not gloomy and melancholy. A propensity to hope and joy is real riches: One to fear and sorrow, real poverty" (Sc 22, Mil 167).<sup>6</sup> My goal in this paper is to explain and justify the Sceptic's statement, which I believe Hume endorses. I will explain what Hume's cheerfulness is, and compare it to Stoic tranquility. And I will conclude with some reflections on philosophy's role in promoting a happy life by safeguarding cheerfulness. Ultimately, Hume agrees with his Sceptic's assessment of the

importance of cheerfulness for a happy life, but disagrees with the extent of her pessimism about philosophy's contribution.

## 2. Two sides of cheerfulness

In both the *Treatise* and the second *Enquiry*, Hume briefly discusses cheerfulness's status as a virtue. In both discussions, he tells us that it “begets esteem” or “carries a great merit” because it is immediately agreeable to oneself (T 3.3.4.8, SBN 611; EPM 7.1–2, SBN 250). It earns these praises foremost by bringing joy and other positive emotions to its possessors. Someone of a cheerful temperament tends to feel hope, joy, and love, and is encouraged to take notice of and pursue all sorts of innocent pleasures (Sc 22, Mil 167; DNR 12.29, KS 225–26; cf. T 3.3.4.8, SBN 611). These positive emotions then easily spread to other people, through sympathy. Cheerfulness lends “sprightliness” to the cheerful person's “countenance, discourse, and behaviour,” inspires “jovial talk and pleasant entertainment,” and so “diffuses a joy over the whole company” of people around her (EPM 7.1, SBN 250; T 3.3.4.8, SBN 611). Even a dejected melancholic “infuses a sensible complacency and serenity” from a cheerful face (T 2.1.11.2, SBN 316–17; cf. EPM App2.4, SBN 297).<sup>7</sup> This aspect of cheerfulness is familiar to us now. We easily imagine children, playful souls, animated teachers, and reliably fun friends, who can change the mood of a room with a game, or smile, or invitation to see things from a hopeful perspective. We highly value such people.

Mirth, playfulness, sociability, and a “relish for pleasure” (EPM 7.3, SBN 251) are distinctive signs of cheerfulness. But for Hume, this is only half the story. We can hear the virtue's true timbre best when it is accompanied by dissonant chords. In the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, an admirer of Cleanthes exclaims to his other admirers:

You would admire him still more...if you knew him more familiarly. That cheerfulness, which you might remark in him, is not a sudden flash struck out by company: It runs through the whole tenor of his life, and preserves a perpetual serenity on his countenance, and tranquillity in his soul. He has met with severe trials, misfortunes as well as dangers; and by his greatness of mind, was still superior to all of them.

EPM 9.2, SBN 269–70

The mention of “misfortunes” and other “trials” seems to play two roles. First, it shows that Cleanthes’s cheerfulness is more than the superficial joviality of, say, a bottle-friend. It runs throughout Cleanthes’s whole being, and affects even his reactions to life’s poor weathers. In this regard, cheerfulness does not contrast with seriousness. Second, the virtue’s value consists partly in fortification against unhappy accidents. This latter value is often Hume’s focus when he speaks of ‘cheerfulness’—a word he uses relatively infrequently, especially when compared to other virtue terms like ‘benevolence,’ ‘industry,’ or ‘courage.’ In the *History*, for example, the word and its cognates appear primarily when discussing resilience in the face of undue persecution. Queen Anne Boleyn is shown “behav[ing] herself with her usual serenity, and even with cheerfulness” at her own beheading by Henry VIII (H 31.42). Mary Queen of Scots, too, bears a “cheerful, and even a smiling countenance” despite her persecution (H 42.37). She is unshaken throughout the evening before her execution, during which “care of her servants was the sole remaining affair, which employed her concern.” Mary loses no time to despair, but is instead busy exchanging mutual forgiveness with her servants, and inventorying and dispersing her belongings to them. Hume reiterates: “wonted cheerfulness did not even desert her on this occasion” (H 42.38–39).

It is this side of cheerfulness that Hume emphasizes when, in “My Own Life,” he values it at a very high price. In Hume’s own case, his cheerfulness allows him to remain industrious even throughout the many unhappy accidents of life. Despite disappointments and illness, he remains committed to study. To this extent, cheerfulness helps his other virtues manifest, or at least prevents them from being destroyed by circumstance. Insofar as cheerfulness allows one to put one’s other talents to good use, it bears some resemblance to wisdom in Plato or the perfectly good will in Kant. Cheerfulness thus seems to enjoy a kind of priority above other virtues, which it enables, or at least safeguards. This is one respect in which it makes sense to call it “real riches.”

### 3. Transfigured Stoicism

To some degree, these figures—Cleanthes, Anne, Mary, and even Hume himself—look a bit like Stoic sages. They are all mostly undisturbed by misfortune, especially that which results from the turbulent, foolish bustle of human concern. It is not hard to imagine them dwelling, as Hume’s Stoic in his essay “The Stoic” puts it, within

[t]he temple of wisdom[,]...seated on a rock, above the rage of the fighting elements, and inaccessible to all the malice of man. The rolling thunder breaks below; and those more terrible instruments of human fury reach not to so sublime a height. The sage, while he breathes that serene air, looks down with pleasure, mixed with compassion, on the errors of mistaken mortals, who blindly seek for the true path of life, and pursue riches, nobility, honour, or power, for genuine felicity.

Sto 12, Mil 150–51<sup>8</sup>

The Stoic sage here appears deeply withdrawn. She finds no role for external goods, like fame or riches—nor for pursuit of them—in her life, since these things are perishable and in some measure beyond control. “Happiness cannot possibly exist, where there is no security,” she says, “and security can have no place, where fortune has any dominion” (Sto 11, Mil 150). She finds security only in an internally controllable good: the activity of self-perfection through philosophical reflection. As “The Epicurean” of the previous essay puts it (in mocking disbelief), the Stoic sage “make[s herself] happy within [herself],...feasting on [her] own thoughts, of being satisfied with the consciousness of well-doing” (Ep 6, Mil 140; cf. RP 41, Mil 134). Finding such nourishment, she remains tranquil even in stormy weather, which cannot wash away internal reflections.

Hume’s association of cheerfulness with tranquility and serenity suggests such a comparison with the Stoic. But his consistent criticism of the Stoic quest for self-perfection challenges it. First, the ideal of “undisturbed philosophical TRANQUILLITY, superior to pain, sorrow, anxiety, and each assault of adverse fortune” is beyond reach, “far too magnificent for human nature” (EPM 7.16, SBN 256). Accordingly, attempts to achieve this state are likely to founder. In an early letter, Hume complains, evidently from personal experience, that Stoic “Reflections against Death, & Poverty, & Shame, & Pain, & all the other Calamities of Life... in Solitude...serve to little other Purpose, than to waste the Spirits” (HL 1.14). Elsewhere, Hume laughs at the “ineffectual[ity]” of Stoic fortification for a person “lying under the racking pains of the gout” (EHU 8.34, SBN 101).

Worse than ineffectual, Stoic reflection is apt to produce vice rather than virtue. “The endeavour to confine our pleasures altogether within our own minds,” Hume says, “may, at last, render our philosophy like that of EPICTETUS, and other *Stoics*, only a more refined system of

selfishness, and reason ourselves out of all virtue, as well as social enjoyment” (EHU 5.1, SBN 40). Stoicism’s focus on the self, Hume suggests, risks removing one from social life and communal concern. Hume’s Sceptic warns that “incessant study and meditation” do not just remove vicious passions but also “spread an universal insensibility over the mind.” Hume agrees. He claims that the purge of affection from the outside, since it removes natural sympathy, produces reprehensible—even inhuman—results. “*Epictetus*,” Hume explains in “Of Moral Prejudice,” advises us to “counterfeit a Sympathy with” a “Friend in Affliction...if it give him Relief; but [to] take Care not to allow any Compassion to sink into your Heart, or disturb that Tranquillity, which is the Perfection of Wisdom” (MP 3, Mil 540). But, for Hume, our friends’ misfortunes *should* touch us. We should, through natural sympathy, feel some share of their grief. Epictetus’s recommended apathy and dishonesty, on the other hand, should strike us as bizarre and uncaring.

If cheerfulness is to avoid Hume’s criticisms of Stoic tranquility, we need some way to understand how the two differ. We can find some help in Hume’s talk of “real riches.” Hume uses the phrase only once more in his corpus, in the essay “Of Commerce.” There, Hume says that the happiness and defense of a state are largely “united with regard to trade and manufacture” (Co 12, Mil 262). Commerce promotes happiness, by incentivizing people to produce food in excess of subsistence needs in order to afford luxuries. They become more hardworking and productive. This personal industry, being useful and agreeable, directly promotes the population’s virtue and happiness, while also allowing people to afford more luxuries to take pleasure in (cf. RA 3, Mil 270). Commerce also promotes defense by producing “superfluous labor”—for example, in the form of “a public granary of corn, a storehouse of cloth, [or] a magazine of arms” (Co 12, 13, Mil 262). This stored labor is ready in waiting for



protection against unhappy accidents. It is here that Hume calls “trade and industry,” conceived as “a stock of labour,” “real riches.” They are real riches because they, “in times of peace and tranquility, [are] employed for the ease and satisfaction of individuals; but in the exigencies of state may, in part, be turned to public advantage” (Co 13, Mil 262).

The analogy with commerce helps bring out how cheerfulness differs from Stoic tranquility. Like a commercial population, and unlike the Stoic, a cheerful person expects pleasures in all sorts of external goods, and is motivated to pursue them industriously. Her happiness comes largely through her pursuit of those goods. Like commerce, cheerfulness also fortifies us against misfortune, but again in an importantly different way than Stoic tranquility does. Just as a well-prepared nation may suffer losses in a surprise attack, yet soon be ready to launch a counteroffensive, a cheerful person may feel the sharpness of a disappointment, yet, like Hume, bounce back quickly without despairing of success in her endeavors. Neither are, like the Stoic sage, unaffected. And in some cases, the harsh passions suffered will be a sign of the state’s or person’s humanity, as when a population mourns a national tragedy or a cheerful person sheds a tear for a friend who has lost a loved one. Moreover, both the commercial nation and the cheerful person’s responses require a shift in resources or a new kind of engagement. Communal stock-houses and individual wealth can, through legislation or taxation, be transferred to the war effort. And individual hope can be spent exploring new avenues, as Hume did when shifting literary styles between his *Treatise* and *Essays*. Though these shifts can be quick, they will not generally be instant. Nor will the resources be endless. Like a stock of labor, a cheerful disposition can be exhausted by long sieges of misfortune. Cheerfulness is thus a less heroic, but also less mythical and more human, analogue to Stoic tranquility. It is engagement

rather than withdrawal, strength of mind rather than *apathē*, resilience rather than immunity, and alacrity rather than immutability.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. The role of philosophy in living well

I have argued that Hume agrees with his Sceptic's remark that cheerfulness is "real riches," and that Hume can coherently praise this character trait's defense against misfortune while criticizing Stoic fortitude. That may seem to suggest that Hume must also agree with his Sceptic's further point in drawing attention to cheerfulness's high value. Her point is, at least in part, to reject her interlocutors' recommendation of a particular kind of life, or aim in life, as most conducive to happiness. The Epicurean, Stoic, and Platonist are, according to her, all "led astray, not only by the narrowness of their understandings, but by that also of their passions" (Sc 2, Mil 160). For the Sceptic, no one aim will suit everyone. Moreover, happiness turns out to depend not so much on one's aims, but instead on the feelings one is disposed to have. She thinks this because she finds that such dispositions determine which pursuit, if any, pleases, and which pursuit pains. So in calling cheerfulness "real riches," she emphasizes that philosophy is unable to point out any object which will be valuable to all. "All the difference...between one man and another, with regard to life," she concludes, "consists either in the *passion*, or in the *enjoyment*: And these differences are sufficient to produce the wide extremes of happiness and misery" (Sc 19, Mil 167).

Moreover, the Sceptic finds that which propensities of feeling one happens to have is not much under one's control and is as much a matter of fortune as whether one is born into wealth or loses everything to war and disease. This encourages a further pessimism about philosophy's

role in helping us live well, expressed in the Sceptic's denial that it is "always in a man's power, by the utmost art and industry, to correct his temper" (Sc 28, Mil 169).

Does Hume share this pessimism? Many have thought so. According to Robert Fogelin, the Sceptic is really Hume himself "under the thinnest possible disguise" (1985: 119). Again, for M.A. Stewart, "the author's persona comes through...transparently" (1991: 278). James Harris writes: "In the four essays on happiness Hume presents in dramatized form the bankruptcy of the ancient conception of moral philosophy as a means of curing the soul" (2007: 229).<sup>10</sup>

I think this is incorrect.<sup>11</sup> Hume's valuation of cheerfulness may very well be put to a different end than the Sceptic's. Moreover, Hume's most forceful remarks against the utility of philosophy for living well are couched within his critique of Stoicism. But, in the virtue of cheerfulness, he evidently wanted to salvage some grain of truth from Stoic thought, and humanize it. We might wonder then whether he might also rescue philosophical reflection. If he does, he may disagree with his Sceptic's claim that philosophy's "authority is very weak and limited" (Sc 28, Mil 169).

The Sceptic says:

If we can depend upon any principle, which we learn from philosophy, this, I think, may be considered as certain and undoubted, that there is nothing, in itself, valuable or despicable, desirable or hateful, beautiful or deformed; but that these attributes arise from the particular constitution and fabric of human sentiment and affection... What affects the feeling of one with delight, produces uneasiness in another.

Sc 8, Mil 162

The Sceptic then exploits these findings in two related arguments against the utility of philosophy. In the first, she considers a whole host of philosophical maxims, of which most have a Stoical lineage. Maxim by maxim, the Sceptic explains how each could be taken in such a way that it destroys, rather than promotes, happiness or virtue. She then concludes that philosophy cannot be medicine for the mind. But this rests on a misunderstanding about the nature of medicine. The fact that philosophical maxims may harm, or, at any rate, not heal, people of certain temperaments does not show that they cannot heal people of other temperaments. Medicine must be tailored to the patient's particular constitution. No medicine helps everyone. The Sceptic's second argument offers a rejoinder to this objection. She admits that philosophical reflections can be salutary to certain temperaments, but asserts that only the already virtuous will be moved by them, whereas the vicious are left cold or made worse. But then philosophy can only heal the already healthy, and so has no positive effect. This reasoning has several flaws. The first rests on another misunderstanding of medicine. The Sceptic overlooks that medicine can be of use to the already healthy by maintaining rather than restoring health, as does a regimen of diet and exercise. But a second, at least as important flaw is the Sceptic's dichotomous thinking. Hume himself emphasizes in "Of Immortality of the Soul" that "the greatest part of mankind floats between vice and virtue" (IS 23, Mil 594); many in this middle ground may yet be able, to a degree, to improve themselves through philosophical reflection.<sup>12</sup> Hume perhaps underscores this point in a footnote to the essay in which he clarifies that the Sceptic "carries the matter too far" in ignoring a whole host of philosophical maxims "whose truth is undeniable, and whose natural tendency is to tranquillize and soften all the passions" (Sc 51n6.1, Mil 177).

Here we can start to better understand Hume's position on the value of philosophy, of skepticism, and of his four essays on happiness for producing happiness itself. Hume thinks

some philosophy can instill virtuous passions by “painting” virtue “in the most amiable colours; borrowing all helps from poetry and eloquence, and treating their subject in an easy and obvious manner, and such as is best fitted to please the imagination, and engage the affections” (EHU 1.1, SBN 5).<sup>13</sup> But just how—indeed even whether—Hume’s four essays on happiness are supposed to do that is not cut and dry. They may very well “regulate our sentiments” by “plac[ing] opposite characters in proper contrast” (EHU 1.1, SBN 6). But if they do, they do not do so simply by making virtue’s beauty stand out in contrast to vice’s repulsiveness. All the characters can in turn seem both appealing and misguided, and, excepting a few points of agreement, give incompatible advice.<sup>14</sup> It may be that Hume hoped his readers would consider the topic unfinished, and find room to develop their own conclusions, perhaps by reconciling, as much as possible, strands within each essay.<sup>15</sup>

But these essays may work on the passions in yet another way, by producing a sense of perplexity or inability to choose and, relatedly, a sense of philosophy’s own limits. This kind of humiliation, which Hume takes to be the lesson of skeptical philosophy, can, he tells us, “abate [the] pride” of those “inclined, from their natural temper, to haughtiness and obstinacy” (EHU 12.24, SBN 162). And, in the moral realm, it may help philosophers develop an awareness of “not only...the narrowness of their understandings, but...also of their passions” and “predominant inclination[s], to which [their] other desires and affections submit” (Sc 2, Mil 160). If each of Hume’s four philosophical characters appears to tell part of the truth, experience of all four may broaden a reader’s passions and temper her predominant inclinations. This could, I think, promote that reader’s understanding of, and readiness to sympathize with, others whose priorities in life might have otherwise seemed too lax, or too meticulous, or misguided in other ways. In tempering our arrogance, philosophy protects our cheerfulness from calcifying into the

vice of immodesty. Philosophy thus helps us live happy lives, both by maintaining the “real riches” of our cheerfulness, and by promoting cohesion in the diverse, liberal society which Hume thought the modern era made possible. Skepticism about philosophy’s practicality is then itself one way philosophy can be practical, and help us live well.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All citations of Hume use the standard abbreviations and citation styles of the Hume Society, and the essay abbreviations found on davidhume.org. Citations of Hume’s letters use ‘HL,’ followed by the volume and page number in Greig (1932/2011).

<sup>2</sup> Interpreters seem to overlook Hume’s own assessment here. See Siebert (1990), 171: “Hume reviews his life and pronounces serenely that he has little to regret; his life was a success.”

<sup>3</sup> Hume’s avowals of disappointment here seem consistent with his correspondence. See HL 2.322. On whether Hume unintentionally or self-deceivedly exaggerated his failures, see Harris (2015), 463.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to his publications, Hume reports his more literal fortunes, or lack thereof: his “not [being] rich” in youth, his frugality in living off that “very slender fortune,” his later becoming “opulent” from book sales, and even the “pounds” to his name or in his yearly revenue (MOL 3, 4, 7, 17, 19, Mil xxxii, xxxiii, xxxv, xxxviii, xl).

<sup>5</sup> Even Harris (2015)’s careful reading of the essay (461–472) fails to draw a connection between Hume’s invocation of his “ruling passions” and his exhibition of his cheerfulness.

<sup>6</sup> Though Hume genders the Sceptic male at Sc 51n6.1, Mil 177, I use female pronouns.

<sup>7</sup> See Goldhaber (2021) for a discussion of how, for Hume, a cheerful or sanguine temperament is the opposite of and proper cure for the melancholy he associates with excessive skepticism.

<sup>8</sup> See a similar description at EPM 7.16, SBN 256.

<sup>9</sup> It is also a modern magnanimity, realizable by citizens of a cosmopolitan and commercialized society. Hume equates ‘magnanimity’ with ‘greatness of mind,’ and describes Cleanthes’ cheerfulness as “greatness of mind” (EPM 9.2, SBN 269–70). Greatness of mind, for Hume, is a genus of so-called “*heroic virtues*,” including “courage, intrepidity, ambition, love of glory” (T 3.3.2.13, SBN 599-600) and the “undisturbed philosophical tranquillity” of the Stoic sage (EPM

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7.16, SBN 256). Several interpreters have emphasized that Hume “corrects overly narrow conceptions of magnanimity,” “domesticat[ing]” and “democratiz[ing]” it for modern times (Watkins 2009, 390; Hanley 2019, 177; Solomon 2000, 130, respectively; cf. Martin 1992, 385–88). These discussions tend to focus on Hume’s turn from the more warlike species of greatness of mind to a species which encompasses beneficence and general sympathy. I am suggesting that cheerfulness is Hume’s domestication of the species of magnanimity that he associates with Stoic tranquility.

<sup>10</sup> See also Black 2010, 11–12; Walker 2013, 891–92.

<sup>11</sup> I am not alone in this. See Immerwahr (1989), 317ff, Heydt (2007), 13–15. See also Watkins (2019), esp. 96–104, for a systematic defense of the idea that—perhaps especially in his *Essays*—Hume viewed philosophy as medicine for the mind. In response to Harris, she convincingly argues that all four essays highlight the importance of industry to happiness. Below, I explain that the essays’ inconstancies may also constitute philosophical medicine. Qu (2022) rightly sees Hume as critical of his Sceptic’s denial of philosophy’s utility. But Qu oversteps in saying that Hume’s “position is best expressed by the Stoic, as he contradicts the other three interlocutors on aspects of their primary theses” (81). I have argued that Hume contradicts the Stoic, too.

<sup>12</sup> See Watkins (2019), 103.

<sup>13</sup> On Hume’s distinction between philosophy as ‘anatomy’ and philosophy as ‘painting,’ see Immerwahr (1991); Potkay (2000), 16–22; Abramson (2006, 2007); Harris (2007), 226–230, 234; Heydt (2007); and Jost (2014).

<sup>14</sup> On their points of agreement, see note 11; all four essays also emphasize that certain pleasures exhaust themselves over time. On inconsistency, compare Heydt (2007), 13, who points out that

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the first three essays are written in such a style that, “by ‘trying out’ the three different kinds of happiness, the reader recognizes...immediately both their *attractiveness* and their *incompatibility*.” He continues: “It is this confusion and tension that the Sceptic alleviates by undermining the pretensions of the three authors to be presenting *the* nature of human happiness, thereby promoting eclecticism and moderation.” Though the Sceptic may perhaps have this effect on some readers, if I am right, her clear oversights, underscored in Hume’s footnote, may only augment others’ confusion.

<sup>15</sup> It is not clear whether Hume thinks the positions can be reconciled. See his criticism of the “ECLECTICS” in “On the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences” (RP 23, Mil 123). Compare his endorsement of a “mixed kind of life” in EHU 1.6, SBN 8–9; Sc 3, Mil 160; RA 3, Mil 269–70.

<sup>16</sup> For helpful comments, I thank Donald Ainslie, Eugene Chislenko, Jonathan Cottrell, Stephen Mackereth, Elizabeth Radcliffe, Margaret Watkins, and audiences at the British Society for the History of Philosophy and at the Princeton-Bucharest Seminar’s panel on “Skepticism and the Passions in Hume’s Philosophy,” organized by Manuel Vasquez Villavicencio.