

HUME AND THE QUESTION OF GOOD MANNERS

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The question of manners is important in David Hume's examination of human nature primarily because of the weight he assigns to the so-called 'social virtues'. Man is, for Hume, a being that naturally tends to form societies, and the study of human nature is, after all, the study of human sociability, which finds its expression in manners. The present paper shows Hume as a participant in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century discussion about the concept of politeness, a concept which oscillated between the domain of manners and morals and the domain of art. The examination of Hume's ideal of polite manners illustrates the way his classicist taste pervaded the appreciation both of works of art and of social comportment.

Hume und die Frage der guten Manieren

Die Frage der Manieren ist für Humes Untersuchungen über die Natur des Menschen wesentlich und zwar aufgrund der Bedeutung, die er den sog. gesellschaftlichen Tugenden beigemessen hat. Der Mensch ist für David Hume ein Wesen, das von Natur aus zur Gesellschaftsbildung neigt; die Natur des Menschen zu untersuchen heißt deshalb vor allem, die menschliche Soziabilität zu untersuchen, die in den Manieren ihren Ausdruck findet. Der vorliegende Aufsatz präsentiert Hume als Teil der Diskussion über das Konzept der Politesse im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert. Dieses oszillierte zwischen den Bereichen Manieren und Sitten einerseits und Kunst andererseits. Die Untersuchung von Humes Ideal des höflichen Auftretens wirft ein Licht darauf, wie sein klassizistischer Geschmack sowohl seine Wertschätzung von Kunstwerken als auch von sozialem Verhalten durchdringt.

The term 'manners' in the writings of David Hume covers matters connected with the politeness of behaviour and the civilizing process in general.¹ The question of manners is important in Hume's thought in at least four regards. First, his ultimate aim was the practical consequences of philosophy, the formation of the part of man that determines him most, that is, his social virtues. A substantial part of this formation is the cultivation of manners in both

¹ Strangely, the most important English dictionaries of the first half of the eighteenth century, Bailey's *The Universal Etymological English Dictionary* and Chambers's *Cyclopaedia; or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, omit this sense of 'manners'. Bailey does not include 'manners' at all, and the entry in the *Cyclopaedia* is limited to the domain of literature ('manners' of the characters in poetry or drama). See Nathan Bailey, *The Universal Etymological English Dictionary*, vol. 2 (London: Thomas Cox, 1737), not paginated; Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia; or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, vol. 2 (London: J. & J. Knapton, 1728), 494. Hume's use of 'manners' has the scope of French term 'moeurs'; see, for instance, Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel*, vol. 2 (The Hague: A. et R. Leers, 1690), not paginated; this study nevertheless concentrates on what the French would call 'manières', see, for example, Gabriel Girard, *Synonymes françois* (Paris: d'Houry, 1741), 12–13.

the wider and the narrower sense of the word. Second, man, for Hume, is a being that naturally tends to form societies, and the study of human nature is, after all, the study of human sociability, which finds its expression in manners. Third, the sentiment of taste concerning particular personal manners considerably influences our pleasure or disgust in contemplation of someone's character, of moral beauty or deformity. Fourth, Hume's concept of good manners and other 'companionable qualities' illustrates the preferences of his taste in general, his 'classicism' (owing to the analogy between manners and works of art explicit in his writings).² It also testifies to his legendary Francophilia. In his essay 'Of Civil Liberty', Hume mentions 'that art, the most useful and agreeable of any, *l'Art de Vivre*, the art of society and conversation',³ which was perfected by the French, whereas in Britain there still remain – in the words of Horace – the traces of the rustic past. This contrast between French 'politeness', 'elegance', and British (especially English) 'rusticity', even 'barbarousness' occurs rather often in Hume's texts, especially in the letters written during his second sojourn in France. According to Hume, one of the criteria of the politeness of a nation was its admiration for men of letters. The enthusiastic reception of the author of *The History of England* by Parisian society is well known.⁴

Hume's application of the term 'polite' is broad, as it is used, for instance, in Shaftesbury⁵ or *The Spectator*. It refers not only to the manner of behaving in

² The study primarily focuses on the last two aspects of Hume's concept of manners, that is, the relations between manners and morals and the connections between his ideal of agreeable manners and his literary and artistic preferences. In both these aspects Hume does not deviate from the models set by continental treatises of *savoir-vivre*, which are in turn largely indebted to the works of Cicero. The pervasive influence of Hume's early reading becomes in this respect particularly apparent when we consider his use of the Ciceronian concepts of *decorum* and *moderatio*. Hume makes the theory of manners a part of his philosophy of human nature, elaborates it, for instance, in regard to his theory of the passions, sets it in a political context, and so forth, but his views concerning what is agreeable in social manners do not substantially evolve during his life. If we compare the earliest texts like 'An Historical Essay on Chivalry and Modern Honour' to the works of his maturity, we find the same emphasis on moderation and disapproval of all excess and extravagance in manners (that are not redeemed by 'greatness of mind' of course – the exception, which appears in the *Treatise*). The present article therefore considers Hume's opinions as an abstract whole, where the works he wrote within the span of several decades form a surprising unity.

³ David Hume, 'Of Civil Liberty', in *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), 91.

⁴ See Hume's account in 'My Own Life', in *Essays*, xxxix.

⁵ See Lawrence E. Klein, 'The Third Earl of Shaftesbury and the Progress of Politeness', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 18 (1984), 200–2. See also Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

society, but also to a certain manner of writing, to the *beaux arts*, and to learning in general. Hume concurs with Shaftesbury in his project of creating 'polite philosophy', that is, philosophy without pedantry, 'elegant writing' that should help to polish English letters at last and, accordingly, English taste and manners. 'To philosophize, in a just Signification, is but to carry *Good-breeding* a step higher.' This often-quoted sentence from *Characteristicks* would undoubtedly be endorsed by Hume.⁶ For him, bad manners go hand in hand with unsound philosophizing: 'sensible manners' are hardly compatible with 'subtilties of school philosophy';⁷ with dogmatizing or religious enthusiasm. It is not only scholastic dogmatizing that is connected with the extravagant austerity of morals and manners, but any pretentious teaching (like the 'severe wisdom' of the Stoics) can result in our reasoning 'ourselves out of all virtue as well as social enjoyment'.⁸ That would be a fatal loss, because the pleasures of social *commerce*, especially of friendship and conversation, are the greatest and the most innocent we are granted. (E. C. Mossner shows that where friendship was at stake, the 'inquirer after truth' would yield to 'le bon David'.)⁹ The beginning of Section V of the first *Enquiry* implies that we should expect agreeable manners and active sociability most likely from someone of a moderately sceptical disposition. The texts of the Schoolmen also sin against the principles of polite writing (that means against good taste) and therefore cannot aid in the cultivation of man. To be 'servicable [*sic*] to Virtue' one must become 'a Writer of Taste'.¹⁰ The amelioration of morals and manners needs 'elegant writers' such as Cicero or Addison, writers of 'easy and obvious' philosophy. The conclusion of the third book of the *Treatise* suggests that the abstruse reasoning of the whole work is only preliminary to more engaging, more elegant writing which will be more directly 'subservient to *practical morality*'.¹¹ This writing will include the

⁶ Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, 'Miscellaneous Reflections', in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, vol. 3 (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001), 99. See also Dabney Townsend, *Hume's Aesthetic Theory: Taste and Sentiment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 25–7; James Moore, 'The Social Background of Hume's Science of Human Nature', in *McGill Hume Studies*, eds. David Fate Norton, Nicholas Capaldi, and Wade L. Robinson (San Diego: Austin Hill Press, 1979), 27–9.

⁷ See David Hume, *The History of England*, vol. 1 (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983), 371.

⁸ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, vol. 4 (Edinburgh: Adam Black and William Tait, 1826), 49.

⁹ Ernest C. Mossner, *The Forgotten Hume* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 97–9.

¹⁰ 'And tho' I am much more ambitious of being esteem'd a Friend to Virtue, than a Writer of Taste; yet I must always carry the latter in my Eye, otherwise I must despair of ever being servicable to Virtue.' David Hume, *The Letters of David Hume*, vol. 1, ed. J. Y. T. Greig (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), 33.

¹¹ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), 621.

Essays as well as *The History of England* – Hume had a high opinion of historians' ability to promote the case of virtue.¹² He himself eventually succeeded in cutting the desired figure of a philosopher who is at the same time ingenious and agreeable, 'who joins the greatest depth of thought to the greatest elegance of expression',¹³ the figure of a man, who is at home in both the *learned* and the *conversable* world.¹⁴

The importance of the social qualities of man is derived from Hume's emphasis on his social dimension: it is mainly these qualities that make up the virtuousness of a person.¹⁵ Hume defines virtue as a useful or agreeable quality of mind. The second *Enquiry* lists four classes of such qualities: *qualities useful to others*, *qualities useful to the person himself*, *qualities immediately agreeable to others* and *qualities immediately agreeable to the person himself*.¹⁶ 'Good Manners or Politeness' (also 'good-breeding' in the *Treatise*) are dealt with as a quality of the third class, which further includes wit, modesty, decency (or decorum), cleanliness and *je-ne-sais-quoi*.¹⁷ Politeness represents only a 'limited endowment' in comparison with the 'enlarged virtues of humanity, generosity, beneficence'¹⁸ but it is an indispensable part of any character that aspires to perfection. Hume describes politeness as a kind of supplement to justice:

As the mutual shocks, in *society*, and the oppositions of interest and self-love have constrained mankind to establish the laws of *justice*, in order to preserve the advantages of mutual assistance and protection: in like manner, the eternal contrarieties, in *company*, of men's pride and self-conceit, have introduced the rules of Good Manners or Politeness, in order to facilitate the intercourse of minds, and an undisturbed commerce and conversation.¹⁹

Politeness, as well as justice, is, then, an artificial rein to human egoism and represents a developed stage in the civilizing of pride. Departing from Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, Hume follows Mandeville in this respect, but he

¹² See David Wootton, 'Hume, "the Historian"', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, ed. David Fate Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 282.

¹³ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1984), 179.

¹⁴ See David Hume, 'Of Essay Writing', in *Essays*, 533–7. For an analysis of the relations between the learned and the conversable, see Ralph S. Pomeroy, 'Hume's Proposed League of the Learned and Conversable Worlds', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 19 (1986): 373–94.

¹⁵ 'When a man is called virtuous [...], we chiefly regard his social qualities, which are, indeed, the most valuable.' David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (La Salle: Open Court, 1991), 157.

¹⁶ For a brief survey, see *ibid.*, 106–17.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 98–105. (The list in the *Treatise* is fairly similar.)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 98.

does not see politeness as depending exclusively on social conventions.²⁰ (Hume's only specific reference to Mandeville in *Of Refinement in the Arts* is disapproving, yet he often concurs with him, for example, holding the same opinion regarding the evolution of politeness that is expressed in Mandeville's sentence: 'Luxury and Politeness ever grew up together.'²¹) Politeness is not exclusively an arbitrary invention of some 'skilful politicians' or legislators for Hume, it also evolves naturally and spontaneously as a result of family life, which is the first school of politeness: 'In a little time, custom and habit operating on the tender minds of the children, makes them sensible of the advantages, which they may reap from society, as well as fashions them by degrees for it, by *rubbing off* those rough corners and untoward affections, which prevent their coalition.'²² The more refined forms of manners are, however, a product of judgement drawing on experience, and depend on the development of the arts and sciences as well as on the political system of the country. The role of experience is crucial: good manners are grounded empirically; they cannot be formed by an unchecked imagination, which is capable of breeding such monsters as 'that Monster of Romantick Chivalry', one of the fabrications symptomatic of the Dark Ages.²³ Romantic chivalry and 'knight errantry' are a figment of *gothick* spirit as well as unintelligible, fantastic philosophy or over-decorated architecture. According to Hume, *romance* represents misleading and falsehood, and stands in opposition to history as to an educative, matter-of-fact genre.²⁴

One of the factors essential to the necessary curbing of the imagination is the frequentation of good company. Neither sensible philosophy nor sensible manners can arise in seclusion, without the beneficial influence of conversation – without conversation there can be neither 'polite philosophy' nor politeness. After all, comportment and conversation are determined by the same imperatives.²⁵

²⁰ See Moore, 'Social Background', 32–9. See also E. J. Hundert, *The Enlightenment's Fable: Bernard Mandeville and the Discovery of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 84–6.

²¹ Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 147. See also David Hume, 'Of Refinement in the Arts', in *Essays*, 280.

²² Hume, *Treatise*, 486. See also Annette Baier, 'Hume's Account of Social Artifice – Its Origins and Originality', *Ethics* 98 (1988): 769–74.

²³ See Ernest C. Mossner, 'David Hume's "An Historical Essay on Chivalry and Modern Honour"', *Modern Philology* 45 (1947): 57. See also Moore, 'Social Background', 35.

²⁴ See David Hume, 'Of the Study of History', in *Essays*, 563–8. For an account of Hume's attitude to romance, see Rebecca Tierney-Hynes, 'Hume, Romance, and the Unruly Imagination', *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 47 (2007): 641–58.

²⁵ See Alain Montandon, 'Conversation', in *Dictionnaire raisonné de la politesse et du savoir-vivre*, ed. Alain Montandon (Paris: Seuil, 1995), 136.

This conversation takes place in a mixed-sex society; it is not a discourse of male savants. However much Hume condemns chivalry and the fantastic gallantry connected with it, he defends the natural gallantry against those 'more zealous partizans of the ancients,' who 'have asserted it to be foppish and ridiculous, and a reproach, rather than a credit, to the present age.'²⁶ In this sentence from *Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences* he is referring to Shaftesbury's *Moralists*, most likely to the passage where modern gallantry is treated as 'false, monstrous, and Gothick; quite out of the way of Nature, and sprung from the mere Dregs of Chivalry or Knight-Errantry', which even aggravates it, the original chivalry in itself being 'of a better Taste than that which reigns at present in its stead'.²⁷ Hume's defence of gallantry is based on an assumption that it refines manners: 'What better school for manners, than the company of virtuous women'.²⁸ This is a commonplace, because almost every writer who had before him dealt with the question of politeness stresses the importance of female company, like La Bruyère or Hume's favourite Saint-Évremond (to limit ourselves to those Hume certainly read). Hume's 'pro-gallantry' stance is quite in line with his predilection for French polite authors.²⁹ But it is the company of 'virtuous' women that improves manners, not 'the company of women of fashion' recommended by the Earl of Chesterfield in one of the letters to his son.³⁰ The essay 'Of National Characters' also suggests that the most important source of politeness is 'free intercourse between sexes', but only when 'properly managed', that is, without excesses of debasing passions such as jealousy: unlike gallantry, duelling does not refine manners.³¹ This *proper management* of contact between the sexes is of course to be expected

²⁶ David Hume, 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences', in *Essays*, 131.

²⁷ Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, 'The Moralists: A Philosophical Rhapsody', in *Characteristicks*, vol. 2, 111.

²⁸ Hume, 'Rise and Progress', 134.

²⁹ Compare: 'Ils entent sur cette extrême politesse que le commerce des femmes leur a donnée.' Jean de La Bruyère, *Les caractères* (Paris: Hachette, 1950), 223. 'Soit que les femmes soient naturellement plus polies et plus galantes, ou que pour leur plaisir, l'esprit s'éleve et s'embellisse; c'est principalement auprès d'elles, qu'on apprend à être agréable.' Charles de Marguetel de Saint-Denis, Seigneur de Saint-Évremond, 'Pensées sur l'honnêteté', in *Oeuvres mêlées*, vol. 6 (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1670), 44. According to Magendie, there is a 'general tendency' to recommend the frequentation of female company in the treatises of manners. See Maurice Magendie, *La politesse mondaine et les théories de l'honnêteté, en France au XVIIe siècle, de 1600 à 1660*, vol. 1 (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1993), 188. See also Barbara Taylor, 'Feminists Versus Gallants: Manners and Morals in Enlightenment Britain', *Representations* 87 (2004): 128–30.

³⁰ Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield, *Letters to His Son on the Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman*, vol. 1 (Washington: M. Walter Dunne, 1901), 40. Chesterfield was seen as a representative of 'Gallic, lascivious gallantry'. See Taylor, 'Feminists Versus Gallants', 132.

only in society where gallantry is devoid of lasciviousness and politeness is not a mere polish that masks moral depravity.

As a reader of Castiglione, Gracián, La Bruyère, and Saint-Évremond, Hume could not fail to realize that the origins of gallantry and the development of politeness are bound up with court life. French manners are more refined than manners in Britain because France is a monarchy and one must 'court the good graces and favour of the great' there to gain an office: 'To be prosperous [...], it is requisite for him to render himself agreeable, by his wit, complaisance, or civility.'³² Unlike Shaftesbury, Hume does not try to separate politeness from the court, because courtliness is not something psychosocially and artistically destructive for him. Hume is not, however, particularly interested in the politeness of courtiers – what he examines is urban politeness in general, which was, in his day, no longer limited to court society. He considers the French emphasis on politeness a result of a more developed sociability. (The French love of company was one of the first things he experienced as a young man while staying at La Flèche³³ – Hume's first sojourn in France was an impulse for his early reflexions on politeness.) This emphasis should not occur at the expense of 'more solid qualities'.³⁴ Hume never praised manners alone as a *moyen de parvenir*, but he clearly saw that polished manners were often more conducive to social and political prominence than less visible qualities.³⁵ *The History of England* abounds with examples of successful men whose accomplishments in matters of 'graceful demeanour' and 'polite address' were not complemented by solid or intrinsic virtues (for example, the Earl of Somerset) or even served to hide a vicious nature (as in Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester). The old discussion about the relation between real, *solid* virtue and superficial, fashionable politeness (or good manners) results for Hume in the following observation: the greater the man, the lesser need there is for him to be polite. Social virtues (politeness is one of them) are our compensation for the

³¹ David Hume, 'Of National Characters', in *Essays*, 215. See also the passage omitted from 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences'. Hume, 'Rise and Progress', 626. In *History of England* Hume treats the 'fury of duels' as a 'result of the romantic chivalry'. Hume, *History of England*, vol. 5, 133.

³² Hume, 'Rise and Progress', 126. Hume's argumentation bears a striking resemblance to that of Saint-Évremond: 'On ne s'étudie qu'à plaire dans les Cours des Rois, parce qu'on y fait sa fortune en se rendant agréable; de là vient que les Courtisans sont plus polis.' Saint-Évremond, 'Pensées sur l'honnesteté', 32–3.

³³ See Ernest C. Mossner, 'Hume at La Flèche, 1735: An Unpublished Letter.' *Texas Studies in English* 38 (1958): 32.

³⁴ Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Morals*, 99.

³⁵ In the words of one of Hume's favourite authors, Girard: 'C'est presque toujours les manières, plutôt que les qualités essentielles qui font qu'on est goûté dans le monde ou qu'on ne l'est pas.' Girard, *Synonymes français*, 13.

grandeur that the ancients possessed. A hero, a genius can be 'rough'; for 'men of more ordinary talents', on the other hand, the social virtues are 'still more essentially requisite'.³⁶ In other words: 'Only perfect integrity can atone for rough manners and unamiable character.'³⁷ Hume does not reject the idea that outward politeness should to a certain degree make up for the lack of other qualities, but he reminds us – in the passage quoted above – that politeness represents only a 'limited endowment'. He occasionally³⁸ adopts the distinction between *politeness* and *civility* that was common in French discourse – *politesse* as a quality of the 'heart', *civilité* as something inferior, superficial, deceptive.³⁹ Mostly, however, he employs *politeness* only as an equivalent of *good manners*, that is, mere civility. Politeness, according to Hume, involves a certain pretence: 'Among well-bred people, a mutual deference is affected; contempt of others disguised.'⁴⁰ This is the 'innocent dissimulation' Hume talks about in one of his letters from France, a dissimulation, 'or rather simulation, without which it is impossible to pass through the world'.⁴¹ He indeed does not indulge in such praise of sincerity that characterizes, for example, Montesquieu's *Éloge de la sincérité*. 'Natural' does not mean 'sincere' for Hume, although life in constant dissimulation can spoil one's character.⁴²

The compliance with what a particular time and country see as politeness does not necessarily bring any 'alienation' or deformation of the individual. The civilizing process is not something, for Hume, that entails falsehood;⁴³ no substantial conflict arises between the 'central' self and the 'social' self,⁴⁴ because there is no real, inner, natural, authentic, or even transcendent self that could clash with the social self and *its* manners. Man is *originally* a social being; society is not a place of corruption of his ideal, innocent pre-social state. Such a state remains a fiction of philosophers, 'not unlike that of the *golden age*, which poets have invented'.⁴⁵ A prominent driving force of the social self is

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9. Again, this observation is nothing new – La Bruyère, for example, says: 'Il faut avoir de bien éminentes qualités pour se soutenir sans la politesse.' La Bruyère, *Les caractères*, 104.

³⁷ Hume, *History of England*, vol. 4, 72.

³⁸ See, for example, Hume, *Letters*, vol. 1, 20.

³⁹ See Jean Starobinski, *Le remède dans le mal: Critique et légitimation de l'artifice à l'âge des Lumières* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 23–6. See also Alain Montandon, 'Politesse', in *Dictionnaire raisonné*, 713–16.

⁴⁰ Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Morals*, 98.

⁴¹ Hume, *Letters*, vol. 1, 439.

⁴² See the 'scandalous' passage dealing with priestly hypocrisy from *Of National Characters*. David Hume, 'Of National Characters', in *Essays*, 200.

⁴³ See Hume, *History of England*, vol. 1, 179.

⁴⁴ The expressions are used in Klein, *Shaftesbury*, 75.

⁴⁵ Hume, *Treatise*, 493. See also Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Morals*, 21–2.

vanity (or self-love), an important agent in the progress of sociability: men 'love [...] to show their wit or their breeding; their taste in conversation or living, in clothes or furniture'.⁴⁶ Vanity is closely connected with 'love of fame' which makes us take account of the opinion of others in correcting our conduct. Society represents an ever-present mirror of our manners, and paying attention to the images it shows has a morally beneficent effect: 'This constant habit of surveying ourselves, as it were, in reflection, keeps alive all the sentiments of right and wrong.'⁴⁷ It is a part of the inevitable 'simulation', which directs our actions in society.⁴⁸ Hume realizes the theatricality of social commerce, but – here his view differs from the opinion of the French *moralistes* – it does not mean for him that the life of society is based on illusiveness, lying, and flattery. His treatment of vanity is decidedly non-Augustinian: neither vanity nor *amor sui* is a mark of depravity of condemned mankind.⁴⁹

The origin of politeness lies in self-interest, but we approve of politeness not only because it serves well one's self-assertion – we also feel 'sympathy' resulting from our apprehension of its public utility. Although the approbation of polite manners is bound up with utility, their agreeableness is an immediate effect that does not depend on 'any consideration of utility or beneficial tendencies'.⁵⁰ Most of the *qualities immediately agreeable to others* allow of explanation, at least to a certain degree, but there is a quality that makes all reasoning stop short. Like so many 'polite' writers before him, Hume has to acknowledge the irreducible *je-ne-sais-quoi* as the mysterious source of our affection, the indescribable constituent of pleasing manners. The second *Enquiry* is more explicit than the *Treatise* on this point:

But besides all the *agreeable* qualities, the origin of whose beauty we can, in some degree, explain and account for, there still remains something mysterious and inexplicable, which conveys an immediate satisfaction to the spectator, but how, or why, or for what reason, he cannot pretend to determine. There is a manner, a grace, an ease, a genteelness, an I-know-not-what, which some men possess above others, which is very different from external beauty and comeliness, and which, however, catches our affection almost as suddenly and powerfully. [...] This class of accomplishments, therefore, must be trusted entirely to the blind, but sure testimony of taste and sentiment; and must be considered as part of ethics, left by nature to baffle all the pride of philosophy, and make her sensible of her narrow boundaries and slender acquisitions.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Hume, 'Refinement in Arts', 271.

⁴⁷ Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Morals*, 115.

⁴⁸ See Adelin-Charles Fiorato, 'Simulation/Dissimulation', in *Dictionnaire raisonné*, 801–42.

⁴⁹ See Elena Russo, 'The Self, Real and Imaginary: Social Sentiment in Marivaux and Hume', *Yale French Studies* 92 (1997): 138.

⁵⁰ Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Morals*, 98.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 104–5; see also Hume, *Treatise*, 611–12.

Hume cannot accept Shaftesbury's Platonic view that the *je-ne-sais-quoi* results from the 'Perfection of Numbers' and only the ignorant hold it to be a kind of charm.⁵² Nor does he share Hutcheson's opinion concerning '*je ne sçay quoy's*', which are seen as 'natural indications' of moral virtues,⁵³ nor, for him, is *je-ne-sais-quoi* a sign of God's grace. The effect of the *je-ne-sais-quoi* is 'sudden' and 'powerful' according to Hume, but he does not try to explain it as an effect based on surprise.⁵⁴ The accomplishments behind the *je-ne-sais-quoi* are quite *à part* – it is not the indefinable result of a mixture of the other agreeable qualities. Hume is comparatively reserved in his treatment of the 'I-know-not-what', because he restrains its power to the domain of the personal *qualities immediately agreeable to others* and thinks of it only as an added value. By contrast, in the famous French translation of Gracián's *Oráculo manual* by Amelot de la Houssaie, which Hume was probably familiar with, the *je-ne-sais-quoi* was a power without which there was no beauty, a power transcending even virtues like courage or wisdom;⁵⁵ Dominique Bouhours, who devoted a separate treatise to the matter, deals with the *je-ne-sais-quoi* as with a principle which works almost everywhere, both in the order of nature and in the order of art. He describes the *je-ne-sais-quoi* as something capable of superseding all personal attainments or – in case that it is missing – capable of invalidating them.⁵⁶ Hume's conception of the *je-ne-sais-quoi* shows that taste can be decisive for our choice of company. When associating with people, we are often led only by 'the blind, but sure testimony of taste and sentiment' – this *blind* taste should be *good* taste then. Cultivation of taste brings with it the cultivation of true friendship with proper companions, because refined taste for the 'polite arts' entails a more delicate discernment of character.⁵⁷

⁵² Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, 'Soliloquy; Or, Advice to an Author', in *Characteristicks*, vol. 1, 204.

⁵³ Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004), 166.

⁵⁴ This was the conjecture of Montesquieu. See Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, 'Essai sur le goût', in *Essai sur le goût (précédé de Éloge de la sincérité)* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1993), 56.

⁵⁵ See Baltasar Gracián, *L'homme de cour* (Paris: Gérard Lebovici, 1990), 75. *Je-ne-sais-quoi* is here a version of Gracián's *el despejo*, which is in fact closer to the *sprezzatura* of Castiglione. Schopenhauer, for example, translates it as 'edle, freie Unbefangenheit', see Baltasar Gracián, *Hand-Orakel und Kunst der Weltklugheit* (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam, 1890), 65.

⁵⁶ See Dominique Bouhours, *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* (Paris: Sébastien Mabre-Cramoisy, 1671), 250–7. For a survey, see also Jean-Louis Jam, 'Je-ne-sais-quoi', in *Dictionnaire raisonné*, 517–27.

⁵⁷ See David Hume, 'Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion', in *Essays*, 6–7.

There is another agreeable sentiment evoked by personal manners, which evades explanation by the principle of utility – namely, the sentiment of the moral sublime.⁵⁸ We experience the moral sublime in the presence of heroic virtue and this experience is an agreeable one, although we understand that heroism is dangerous and destructive and therefore often not *useful* either to the individual in question, or to others. Hume uses the example of military heroism, where the disapproval caused by our reflexion on ‘the infinite confusions and disorder, which it has caus’d in the world’,⁵⁹ and also the unease of comparing ourselves to something which surpasses us, are overpowered by the ‘sublime’ experience of the moral vastness of the hero.⁶⁰ An example of such virtue can be found in volume VI of the *History* where Hume portrays the military genius of the 5th Earl of Montrose, whose ‘actions and deportment’ were characterized by ‘something [...] of the *vast* and *unbounded*’.⁶¹ Montrose’s portrait shows the traits which constitute the ‘sublime kind of merit’, notably ‘excessive courage and magnanimity’; there is definitely ‘something so dazzling in his character, the mere contemplation of it so elevates the mind, that we cannot refuse it our admiration’,⁶² notwithstanding some bloody deeds. Hurtfulness and excessiveness can be redeemed for the appreciation of taste by personal greatness and splendour: only then may they elicit a certain kind of approval. The sentiment of the moral sublime also defies the principles of politeness. It forms an exception to the ‘polite’ rule that visible pride and self-esteem are disagreeable because they offend our own vanity.

The examination of heroic virtue in the *Treatise* is preceded by a mention of Christian humility. Hume is rather reserved towards humility as a thoroughgoing persuasion of one’s unworthiness, because he sees it as *unnatural* and detrimental to the character. The problem of Christian humility is connected with the problem of modesty in general. (Hume uses the terms ‘humility’ and ‘modesty’ as interchangeable in this respect.) Both modesty (humility) and pride balance between virtue and vice (if we think of virtue as ‘*mental action or quality*’ that ‘*gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation*; and vice the contrary’⁶³). Excessive internal humility is among those ‘monkish virtues’ which Hume deprecates in the second *Enquiry* and

⁵⁸ See Townsend, *Hume’s Aesthetic Theory*, 134.

⁵⁹ Hume, *Treatise*, 601. For the corresponding passage in the second *Enquiry*, see Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Morals*, 95.

⁶⁰ See Elizabeth Neill, ‘Hume’s Moral Sublime’, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 37 (1997): 251–3.

⁶¹ Hume, *History of England*, vol. 6, 24.

⁶² Hume, *Treatise*, 600–1.

⁶³ Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Morals*, 129; Hume’s italics.

ultimately places in 'the catalogue of vices'.⁶⁴ As for the 'internal sentiment' of a person, Hume allows only a 'small bias towards modesty', while in our comportment there should be 'strong bias' towards it.⁶⁵ The display of humility or modesty is one of the essential components of agreeable manners and it often serves only to flatter the vanity of others; it is used as a means. None the less, Hume does not call such civility 'superficial' or 'false' as, for instance, Courtin would do. (Courtin treats *civilité* as based upon *modestie*, which is not studied and 'fills the spirit with a Christian contempt of oneself & with an esteem for all the others'; he condemns pretended modesty as an artifice of pride – *un artifice de l'orgueil*.⁶⁶) Hume does not propose a theory of *civilité chrétienne*; for him modesty is just a counterweight to man's natural propensity to overvalue himself, and as such renders social commerce more agreeable, but this is far from saying that man should be 'ignorant of his own merits and accomplishments'.⁶⁷ The *Treatise* expresses this more resolutely:

I believe no one, who has any practice of the world [...], will assert, that the humility, which good-breeding and decency require of us, goes beyond the outside, or that a thorough sincerity in this particular is esteem'd a real part of our duty. On the contrary, we may observe, that a genuine and hearty pride, or self-esteem, if well conceal'd and well founded, is essential to the character of a man of honour [...].⁶⁸

Outward humility must be *proper, decorous*, which means it must suit our age, social 'rank', and so forth. Although obvious, humility, which forms a part of good manners, avoids ostentation, for ostentatious humility smacks of pride and even impudence.⁶⁹ In one of the withdrawn essays, *Of Impudence and Modesty*, Hume shows the special place impudence occupies among the vices. It is the only vice that is 'difficult to be attained', one which has positive effects

⁶⁴ Ibid., 108. This is the passage Kemp Smith quotes as an example of the limitations of Hume's 'avowedly unoriginal' ethical outlook, 'limitations which are those of his circle and of his age'. Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume* (London: Macmillan, 1964), 562.

⁶⁵ Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Morals*, 102.

⁶⁶ Antoine de Courtin, *Nouveau traité de la civilité* (Paris: Louis Josse et Charles Robustel, 1728), 19. Hume is in this respect much closer to Nicolas Faret with his 'secular' treatment of *modestie*. See Nicolas Faret, *L'Honnête homme ou l'Art de plaire à la cour* (Paris: Toussaint du Bray, 1630), 97.

⁶⁷ Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Morals*, 102.

⁶⁸ Hume, *Treatise*, 598.

⁶⁹ The manuals of *savoir-vivre* often warn against the disagreeable effects of improper humility. See, for example, Giovanni della Casa, *Galatée* (Paris: René Guignard, 1666), 58–60. Mandeville states that to pretend we have a greater esteem for others than we have for ourselves we must simply 'grow impudent enough'. Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, 145. This kind of 'bare-faced' flattery is incompatible with polished manners (see *ibid.*, 152).

'upon a man's fortune'.⁷⁰ Hume sees it as useful natural talent, the lack of which is hard, almost impossible, to compensate for by some 'counterfeit': 'Nothing carries a man through the world like a true genuine natural impudence.'⁷¹ Hume's treatment of impudence is devoid of moral indignation; it simply states the expediency of certain manners, whether they undermine morality or not: 'overbearing airs', though shameless, replace personal merit in the eyes of the world. Impudence is called a *vice*, but modesty is not mentioned as a *virtue* anywhere in this essay: the *virtuous* opposite of impudence represents a 'decent assurance', not 'modesty'. Impudence is here not only a *quality useful to ourselves* (as it capacitates us 'for business and action'), it even seems to pass sometimes for a *quality immediately agreeable to others*, because many are unable to distinguish it from the 'decent assurance' that naturally accompanies personal merit and does not transgress the rules of politeness.⁷² The search for something like 'decent' or 'modest' assurance is a recurrent motif in the literature of *savoir-vivre*: the Aristotelian search for a mean between over-assurance and diffidence, or, with some, the art of a seeming undervaluation of oneself.⁷³

We saw that in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century discourse the term 'polite' applied not only to social behaviour, but also to the domain of art, especially *belles-lettres*. The entry 'Politesse' written by Diderot for the *Encyclopédie*, for instance, constantly switches from politeness of manners and conversation to that of writings as a matter of course.⁷⁴ Moreover, the critique

⁷⁰ David Hume, 'Of Impudence and Modesty', in *Essays*, 553.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Some critics of 'fashionable' politeness clearly saw the thin line that separates self-assured polished manners from impudence. Addison even held: 'Politeness which reigns among the unthinking part of mankind [...] recommends Impudence as Good-Breeding, and keeps a Man always in Countenance, not because he is Innocent, but because he is Shameless.' Joseph Addison, 'Spectator', no. 231, in *The Spectator*, vol. 4, 104–8 (London: J. S. Jordan, 1794), 107. The relation between modesty and impudence is one of Addison's favourite themes. Like Hume after him, he distinguishes 'a true and genuine impudence', which he considers the only tolerable kind, because it represents the effect of ignorance. See Joseph Addison, 'Spectator', no. 20, in *The Spectator*, vol. 1, 87–90 (London: J. S. Jordan, 1794), 90. Budgell in his turn tried to defend modesty against its being confused with 'sheepishness', and to show that modesty was not at all incompatible with 'assurance'. See Eustace Budgell, 'Spectator', no. 373, in *The Spectator*, vol. 5, 431–4 (London: J. S. Jordan, 1794), 432–3.

⁷³ See Chesterfield, *Letters to his Son*, 378–9.

⁷⁴ See Denis Diderot, 'Politesse', in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, eds Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert (Neufchâtel: Samuel Faulche, 1765), 12:916–17. The manuals of *savoir-vivre* often compared personal manners to works of art. See Michel Lacroix, *De la politesse* (Paris: Commentaire / Julliard, 1990), 404–9.

of 'false' politeness applied equally to the domain of art – the works of Shaftesbury offer numerous examples of such transposition.⁷⁵ In Hume's texts we encounter similar 'switches';⁷⁶ there are also obvious analogies between praising and deprecating manners and works of art. It is explicit already in one of his earliest extant works entitled 'An Historical Essay on Chivalry and Modern Honour', where the affectation of medieval manners, the 'monstrosity' of chivalry, is explained with a parallel to the development of Gothic architecture:⁷⁷

What kind of monstrous Birth this of Chivalry must prove we may learn from considering the different revolution in the Arts, particularly in Architecture, & comparing the Gothic with the Grecian Models of it. The one are plain, simple, regular, but withal majestic & beautiful [*sic*], which when these Barbarians [*i.e. those who conquered the Roman Empire*] unskillfully imitated [*sic*], they run into a wild Profusion of Ornaments, & by their rude Embellishments departed far from Nature & a just Simplicity. They were struck with the Beauties of the antient Buildings, but ignorant how to preserve a just Mean; & giving an unbounded Liberty to their Fancy in heaping Ornament upon Ornament, they made the whole a heap of Confusion, & Irregularity. For the same reason, when they wou'd rear up a new Scheme of Manners or Heroism, it must be strangely overcharged with Ornaments, & no part exempt from their unskillful refinements.⁷⁸

In later years Hume did not substantially change his view. As Mossner points out, a very similar opinion is repeated in the appendix to the first volume of *The History of England*.⁷⁹ Even a poetic rendering of such unnatural (that is, obviously *artificial* in this context), 'overcharged' manners is unsatisfactory and contributes to the tedium of reading. In a passage dealing with Spenser from volume IV of the *History* Hume says:

⁷⁵ See Klein, *Shaftesbury*, 188–92.

⁷⁶ See, for example, Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Morals*, 104; David Hume, 'Of Simplicity and Refinement in Writing', in *Essays*, 195.

⁷⁷ Hume uses the adjective 'Gothic' in accord with the meaning of the 'barbarous' current in the eighteenth century. See Alfred E. Longueil, 'The Word "Gothic" in Eighteenth Century Criticism', *Modern Language Notes* 38 (1923): 455. Once more, in his campaign against everything 'Gothic', Hume concurs with the authors of *The Spectator*: they also wanted to 'banish this Gothic Taste' which sins against just simplicity. See Joseph Addison, 'Spectator, no. 409', in *The Spectator*, vol. 6, 130–34 (London: J. S. Jordan, 1794), 133.

⁷⁸ Mossner, 'Hume's "An Historical Essay"', 58.

⁷⁹ Ernest C. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (Edinburgh and Austin: Nelson, 1954), 47. See also Hume, *History of England*, vol. 1, 487: 'Ideas of chivalry infected the writings, conversation, and behaviour of men, during some ages; and even after they were, in a great measure, banished by the revival of learning, they left modern *gallantry* and the *point of honour*, which still maintain their influence, and are the genuine offspring of those ancient affectations.' Gothic architecture continued to serve Hume as an example of artistic failure. See Hume, 'Simplicity and Refinement', 192–3.

This poet contains great beauties, a sweet and harmonious versification, easy elocution, a fine imagination: Yet does the perusal of his work become so tedious, that one never finishes it from the mere pleasure which it affords: It soon becomes a kind of task-reading [...]. This effect, of which every one is conscious, is usually ascribed to the change of manners: But manners have more changed since Homer's age; and yet that poet remains still the favourite of every reader of taste and judgment. Homer copied true natural manners, which, however rough or uncultivated, will always form an agreeable and interesting picture: But the pencil of the English poet was employed in drawing the affectations, and conceits, and fopperies of chivalry, which appear ridiculous as soon as they lose the recommendation of the mode.⁸⁰

This again clearly echoes the opinion expressed already in the essay on chivalry: 'plain roughness' is preferable to 'chimerical and affected Politeness'.⁸¹ The traits that a work of art and social manners, which aspire to satisfy refined, up-to-date taste in Humean terms, must have in common are fairly evident. First of all it is the observation of *propriety* (Ciceronian *decorum*,⁸² and also *decency*), which entails *moderation* as an expression of sound judgement (Art and manners founded on 'fantastic notions' lack both propriety and moderation). Furthermore, they must be *natural*, that is, devoid of obvious artificiality; only then they can have the desired *elegance*, *simplicity*, and *ease*. (Hume approaches the latter characteristics also with expressions like *smooth(ness)* and *polish(ed)*.) The term *polite* comprises all these traits in relation to both art and manners. Negative evaluations virtually represent the opposites of these attributes: indecorum, exaggeration, excessiveness, affectation, over-refinement, and rudeness. Hume sometimes calls a synthesis of such undesirable features 'Gothic' or 'Asiatic' (as opposed to 'Attic').

Hume's disapproval of indecorum is, at the ethical level, a disapproval of excessive passions, whether they are displayed in eloquence, writing, or in social intercourse. Politeness in general demands the restraint of violent passions, and even classical eloquence, especially when exuberantly figurative, often offends the taste of the *polite* age.⁸³ The charm of simplicity or plainness

⁸⁰ Hume, *History of England*, vol. 4, 386.

⁸¹ Mossner, 'Hume's "An Historical Essay"', 59.

⁸² See Peter Jones, *Hume's Sentiments: Their Ciceronian and French Context* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982), 40–3.

⁸³ Potkay writes about an 'ideology of polite style', which 'encompasses Hume's censure of "excessive" figures. Figures, as the language of the passions, will be stigmatized by a social ethos that applauds restraint. And to possess polished manners means, in word and in deed, precisely to restrain one's passions, while polite taste is the corresponding ability to appreciate restraint in social and esthetic expression.' Adam Potkay, 'Classical Eloquence and Polite style in the Age of Hume', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25 (1991): 50. For a discussion of Hume's reservations about some aspects of classical eloquence, see *ibid.*, 43–9. The relation between preferences of artistic taste and social demands on the manners of individuals is analysed by Elias: classicism

lies also in its being a result of the ability to resist the temptation of various exaggerated and ostentatious 'conceits', the ability to conceal artifice and effort, which was essential for classicist taste. Proper simplicity is an essential condition of *elegant ease*, the highest achievement in the combined realms of art and personal manners. The fact that Hume's treatment of manners is indebted to the theory of rhetoric becomes particularly apparent when we consider this ideal of *ease* or *disengagement*, which is nothing other than the famous *sprezzatura* of Castiglione corresponding to the rhetoric principle of *neglegentia diligens*.⁸⁴ (Hume himself refers to Castiglione, whose treatise was, moreover, extensively drawn on by his favourite 'elegant' authors. *Il Cortegiano* derives the principles of manners from Cicero's *De oratore*⁸⁵ – it must have suited Hume perfectly.) Hume's praise of *ease* shows that he was one of those who considered *grace* an indispensable element of consummate manners.⁸⁶ The emphasis on easiness also concurs with Addison's observations concerning 'modish' urban civility, which, according to him, recently tended to 'agreeable negligence' that returned good breeding its 'natural beauty'.⁸⁷ John Locke thought easiness – and the resulting gracefulness – in demeanour was a 'natural emanation' of a mind free from all great defects. Similarly, for Addison the unaffected negligence which marked a 'fine gentleman' was a result of his virtuousness and piety.⁸⁸ Hume, on the other hand, was well aware that graceful manners have no necessary complement in moral perfection, only in wit that outshines *moral beauty* or *deformity*. Although we know that the 'bearer' of manners is a moral agent, this knowledge can be suppressed by the powerful effect of his presence, by the *immediate pleasure* we feel. Our

in art is an expression of 'the rationality of the court' (*höfische Rationalität*), which consists in the suppressing of emotions. See Norbert Elias, *Die höfische Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), 193.

⁸⁴ See Baldassare Castiglione, *Le parfait courtisan* (Paris: Étienne Loyson, 1690), 60–8. This is one of the most influential passages; it appears, for instance, almost verbatim in the celebrated treatise of Faret, which was practically never out of print during the seventeenth century. See Nicolas Faret, *L'honnête homme*, 34–6.

⁸⁵ See Bérengère Parmentier, *Le siècle des moralistes* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 189. See also Jean-Louis Jam, 'Sprezzatura', in *Dictionnaire raisonné*, 847–53. For Hume's opinion on artifice in rhetoric see David Hume, 'Of Eloquence', in *Essays*, 101, 105.

⁸⁶ It is also inseparable from his idea of impeccable aristocratic comportment, for example: 'King Charles being in his whole deportment a model of easy and gentleman-like behaviour, improved the politeness of the nation.' Hume, *History of England*, vol. 6, 540.

⁸⁷ See Joseph Addison, 'Spectator', no. 119, in *The Spectator*, vol. 2, 403–6 (London: J. S. Jordan, 1794), 404.

⁸⁸ See John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, in *The Works of John Locke*, vol. 8 (London: C. and J. Rivington, 1824), 48; Joseph Addison, 'Spectator', no. 75, in *The Spectator*, vol. 2, 214–18 (London: J. S. Jordan, 1794), 217.

approbation depends entirely on taste and is born apart from any consideration of the consequences of his actions. All kinds of advantages of *mind*, *body* and *fortune* come into play in Hume's ideal of disengaged manners: the 'easy address' modelled on the witty conversation of the French *salon*⁸⁹ is accompanied by 'easy and unconstrained postures and motions', 'an air of health and vigour', 'well-fashioned clothes' that do not hamper bodily movements,⁹⁰ the agreeableness of someone obviously 'at his ease', and presents us with 'the pleasing ideas of plenty'.⁹¹ But all these accomplishments would not suffice, for the ideal ease blends in with the *je-ne-sais-quoi*.

We have already considered Hume's criticism of various 'notions' that demand too much of humanity, such as the Stoic or Cynic conceptions of virtuousness or the excesses of chivalry, and we have every reason to presume that this criticism applies also to the ideal of *honnêteté* formulated by numerous 'polite' authors. Hume's own ideal of 'accomplished merit' from the second *Enquiry*, which owes much to the continental theorists of *honnêteté*, remains, as a 'model of perfect virtue',⁹² only an aid for the purposes of explication: it is practically unattainable. The people who seem to have lived up to the ideal are quasi-legendary figures like Sir Philip Sidney: 'This person is described by the writers of that age as the most perfect model of an accomplished gentleman, that could be formed even by the wanton imagination of poetry or fiction. Virtuous conduct, polite conversation, heroic valour, and elegant erudition, all concurred to render him the ornament and delight of the English court.'⁹³ This image indeed exceeds 'all the pictures drawn by Gratian [*sic*] Castiglione',⁹⁴ for it contains all the qualities requisite for the perfect character in Humean terms: *qualities useful to others* ('virtuous conduct'), *qualities useful to the person himself* ('elegant erudition'), *qualities immediately agreeable to others* ('polite conversation'), and *qualities immediately agreeable to the person himself* ('heroic valour').

Hume realized that his own manners were far from the flawless *mondanité*, and felt better in a select circle of literary friends than in 'general company'.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ According to Mossner, Hume even succeeded in bringing some of the 'easy address' of the French to Scotland: in the meetings of the Edinburgh *literati* around Hume there prevailed an atmosphere of the *salon intime*. See Mossner, *Forgotten Hume*, 197–8.

⁹⁰ Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Morals*, 59.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 84. For an account of the importance of wealth in Hume's conception of social distinction see Steven Wallech, 'The Elements of Social Status in Hume's Treatise', in *Hume as Philosopher of Society, Politics and History*, eds Donald Livingston and Marie Martin (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1991), 45–56.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 108.

⁹³ Hume, *History of England*, vol. 4, 218.

⁹⁴ Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Morals*, 108.

⁹⁵ See Hume, *Letters*, vol. 1, 343.

He seems to comply in a way with another ideal that he cherished, with the ideal of 'simple' manners, which, albeit not polished, impress others with mildness, moderation, and easiness.⁹⁶ Hume considered this simplicity of manners one of his personal accomplishments, and was pleasantly surprised when Paris, the cradle of *politesse*, lavished 'Elogiums' on his character: 'what gave me chief Pleasure was to find, that most of the Elogiums bestowd on me, turnd on my personal Character; my Naivety & Simplicity of Manners, the Candour & Mildness of my Disposition &c.'⁹⁷ Before their famous controversy, he admired similar simplicity in Rousseau, who impressed him with 'natural unaffected politeness'.⁹⁸ It is the *real politeness* different from mere civility, which Hume writes about from his first journey to France.⁹⁹ Such politeness represents an uncommon quality, and with ordinary people it has to be made up for by the observation of artificial or arbitrary rules of good manners. It is an uncommon quality Hume undoubtedly possessed.

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⁹⁶ See Mossner, *Life of Hume*, 103; Mossner, *Forgotten Hume*, 192. Allusions to simplicity and easiness appear repeatedly in the passages dealing with Hume's 'social habits' from Hill Burton's *Life and Correspondence of David Hume*. See John Hill Burton, *Life and Correspondence of David Hume*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1846), 437–40.

⁹⁷ Hume, *Letters*, vol. 1, 437. Hume considered *candour* a typical English quality: 'Candour, sincerity, modesty are the only qualities, which the English of that age possessed in common with the present.' Hume, *History of England*, vol. 5, 132.

⁹⁸ Hume, *Letters*, vol. 2, 36.

⁹⁹ 'By real Politeness I mean Softness of Temper, & a sincere Inclination to oblige & be serviceable [...].' Hume, *Letters*, vol. 1, 20.

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