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# THEORY AND PRACTICE OF HISTORICAL METHOD IN DAVID HUME

PEDRO EDUARDO BATISTA FERREIRA DA SILVA

BRASÍLIA
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Tese apresentada ao Programa de Pós-graduação em História da Universidade de Brasília como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de doutor em História.

**Área de Concentração:** Sociedade, Cultura e Política

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**Orientador:** Prof. Dr. Arthur Alfaix Assis

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To my most loyal friend, Fitz, who, for uncountable hours, made my feet his pillows as many days of reading and writing went by.

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“I am first affrighted and confounded with that forlorn solitude, in which I am plac’d in my philosophy, and fancy myself some strange uncouth monster, who not being able to mingle and unite in society, has been expell’d all human commerce, and left utterly abandon’d and disconsolate. Fain wou’d I run into the crowd for shelter and warmth; but cannot prevail with myself to mix with such deformity. I call upon others to join me, in order to make a company apart; but no one will hearken to me. Every one keeps at a distance, and dreads that storm, which beats upon me from every side. I have expos’d myself to the enmity of all metaphysicians, logicians, mathematicians, and even theologians; and can I wonder at the insults I must suffer? I have declar’d my disapprobation of their systems; and can I be surpriz’d, if they shou’d express a hatred of mine and of my person? When I look abroad, I foresee on every side, dispute, contradiction, anger, calumny and detraction. When I turn my eye inward, I find nothing but doubt and ignorance.”

(**David Hume**, *A Treatise of Human Nature*)

# ABSTRACT

David Hume (1711–1776) was one of his time's most influential, prolific, and multi-tasked theorists. Having produced much of his work on the crossroads of history and philosophy, he wrote about human nature and morality, culture, economy, politics, and society in multiple ways, such as treatises, essays, dissertations, dialogs, and conjectural and philosophical histories. Despite Hume's posthumous canonization as a philosopher, his historical work earned him widespread literary fame in the second half of the 1700s. Based on several of Hume's texts and extensive secondary literature, the present thesis focuses on the theoretical contours of Hume's historical method and its historiographical implementation. The presupposition is that the historian's most ambitious historical enterprise, the multi-volume *History of England: from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688* (1754–1762), is the product of the adaptation and accommodation of a series of theoretical considerations and methodological elements he had theoretically devised between the mid-1730s and the early 1750s. In line with these goals, the thesis follows some of Hume's most detailed considerations about history and historiography in the *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–1740), the first and second *Enquiries* (published in 1748 and 1751, respectively), and several literary and political *Essays* (especially the ones written in the 1740s), while assessing their echoes in the *History of England*. It furthermore situates the philosopher and historian in the broader situation of production, circulation, and reception of historical texts in Britain by the mid-eighteenth century. Finally, from a genre-biased angle, the text also contextualizes Hume's philosophical *History of England* before its present-day readership's expectations of historical authority, credibility, dignity, and impartiality. Overall, the thesis contributes to enlarging the scholarship on Hume's historical thinking under the analytic perspective and vocabularies of historical theory, history of historiography, and history of historical thinking Studies.



**Keywords:** History of Historiography; History of Historical Thinking; Intellectual History; David Hume; Eighteenth-Century Studies.

# RESUMO

David Hume (1711–1776) foi um dos mais influentes, profícuos e versáteis teóricos de seu tempo. Tendo produzido parte significativa de seu trabalho no cruzamento entre a história e a filosofia, Hume escreveu sobre diversos assuntos, dentre os quais se destacam: natureza e moralidade humanas, cultura, economia, política e sociedade. Cumpre destacar que esses textos aparecem em formatos diversos, tais como: tratados, dissertações, diálogos e histórias conjecturais e filosóficas. Apesar da canonização póstuma de Hume como filósofo, foi seu trabalho destacadamente histórico que lhe rendeu ampla fama literária na segunda metade do século 18. Desse modo, baseando-se no exame de diferentes textos de Hume e em extensa literatura secundária, esta tese se centra nos contornos teóricos e na implementação historiográfica do método histórico humeano. A pressuposição é a de que sua mais ambiciosa empreitada histórica — a *História da Inglaterra: da Invasão de Júlio César à Revolução de 1688* (1754–1762) — é produto de adaptações e acomodações de considerações teóricas e de elementos metodológicos fundamentais teorizados por ele entre os anos finais da década de 1730 e os primeiros anos de 1750. Para atingir seu objetivo, a tese segue as considerações mais detalhadas de Hume sobre história e historiografia em seu *Tratado da Natureza Humana* (1739–1740), nas *Investigações Sobre o Entendimento Humano* (1748), nas *Investigações sobre os Princípios da Moral* (1751) e em parte dos *Ensaios*, principalmente os literários e políticos escritos na década de 1740, ao passo que avalia os ecos de tais reflexões na *História da Inglaterra*. Além disso, este trabalho também situa o filósofo e historiador no contexto alargado de produção, circulação e recepção de textos históricos na Grã-Bretanha em meados do século 18 e localiza a *História da Inglaterra* dentro da expectativa comum à época em que histórias, especialmente as filosóficas, pertenciam a um gênero literário de inquestionável autoridade, credibilidade, dignidade e imparcialidade. Por fim, espera-se com esta tese contribuir para o alargamento dos estudos sobre o pensamento histórico de Hume, sob a perspectiva analítica e os vocabulários da teoria da história, da história da historiografia e da história do pensamento histórico.



**Palavras-chave:** História da Historiografia; História do Pensamento Histórico; História Intelectual, David Hume; Século 18.

# RESUMEN

David Hume (1711-1776) fue uno de los teóricos más influyentes, prolíficos y versátiles de su época. Habiendo producido una parte importante de su obra en la encrucijada entre la historia y la filosofía, Hume escribió sobre varios temas, entre los que se destacan: la naturaleza humana y la moral, la cultura, la economía, la política y la sociedad. Cabe señalar que estos textos aparecen en diferentes formatos, tales como: tratados, disertaciones, diálogos y historias conjeturales y filosóficas. A pesar de la canonización póstuma de Hume como filósofo, fue su destacada obra histórica la que le dio una amplia fama literaria en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII. Así, a partir del examen de diferentes textos de Hume y de una extensa literatura secundaria, esta tesis se centra en los contornos teóricos y en la implementación historiográfica del método histórico humeano. La presuposición es que su empresa histórica más ambiciosa, la *Historia de Inglaterra: desde la invasión de Julio César hasta la revolución de 1688* (1754-1762), es producto de adaptaciones y acomodaciones de consideraciones teóricas y elementos metodológicos fundamentales teorizados por él entre finales de la década de 1730 y principios de la de 1750. Para lograr el objetivo propuesto, la tesis sigue las consideraciones más detalladas de Hume sobre la historia y la historiografía en su *Tratado de la naturaleza humana* (1739-1740), en las *Investigaciones sobre el entendimiento humano* (1748), en las *Investigaciones sobre el Principios de moral* (1751) y en parte de los *Ensayos*, principalmente literarios y políticos escritos en la década de 1740, al tiempo que valora los ecos de tales reflexiones en la *Historia de Inglaterra*. Además, este trabajo también sitúa al filósofo e historiador en el contexto más amplio de producción, circulación y recepción de textos históricos en Gran Bretaña a mediados del siglo XVIII y sitúa la *Historia de Inglaterra* dentro de la expectativa común en la época de que las historias, especialmente la filosófica, pertenecían a un género literario de incuestionable autoridad, credibilidad, dignidad e imparcialidad. Finalmente, se espera que esta tesis contribuya a la ampliación de los estudios sobre el pensamiento histórico de Hume, desde la perspectiva analítica y los vocabularios de la teoría de la historia, la historia de la historiografía y la historia del pensamiento histórico.



**Palabras clave:** Historia de la Historiografía; Historia del Pensamiento Histórico; Historia Intelectual; David Hume; Siglo XVIII.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND METHOD OF CITATION

In this thesis, I cite David Hume's texts in the footnotes. Unless stated otherwise, my citations give the texts' abbreviated titles and more detailed location information.

Abbreviations and conventions take the following form:

**EHU** — *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. I cite "the first *Enquiry*" according to the 2000 Clarendon edition, edited by Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000). Citations refer to **EHU** followed by section and paragraph numbers, i.e.: EHU 3.1 (section 3, paragraph 1).

**EPM** — *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals.* I cite "the second *Enquiry"* according to the 1998 Clarendon edition, edited by Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). Citations refer to **EPM** followed by section and paragraph numbers, i.e.: EPM 1.2 (section 1, paragraph 2).

**E** — *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*. I cite the *Essays* according to the 1987 Liberty Fund edition, revised by E. F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987). Citations refer to **E** followed by page, i.e., E 146 (page 146).

**HGB** — *The History of Great Britain: The Reigns of James I and Charles I.* I cite *The History of Great Britain* according to the 1970 Penguin edition edited by Duncan Forbes (London: Penguin Books, 1970). Citations refer to **HGB** followed by page, i.e., HGB 130 (page 130).

**HE** — *The History of England: From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of* 1688. I cite the *History of England* according to the 1983 Liberty Fund edition (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1983). Citations refer to **HE** followed by volume, chapter, and page number, i.e., HE 5.51:212 (volume 5, chapter 51, page 212). I refer to the appendixes as "App", i.e., HE 5.App 4:118 (volume 5, appendix 4, page 118). When necessary, I made minor referencing adaptations to include the editor's foreword, Hume's autobiographical piece *My Own Life*, and Adam Smith's letter to William Strahan, all later additions to the first volume.

**HL** — *The Letters of David Hume.* I cite *The Letters of David Hume* according to the 1932 edition, revised and edited by J. Y. T.

Greig in 2 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932). Citations refer to **HL** followed by volume and page, i.e., HL 1:126 (volume 1, page 126).

**NL** *The New Letters of David Hume*. I cite *The New Letters of David Hume* according to the 1954 edition, edited by R. Klibansky and E. Mossner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954). Citations refer to **NL** followed by page, i.e., NL 120 (page 120).

**THN** *A Treatise of Human Nature*. I cite the *Treatise* according to the 2000 Clarendon edition, edited by David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton in 2 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000). Citations refer to **THN** followed by book, part, section, and paragraph numbers, i.e., THN 3.1.2.4 (book 3, part 1, section 2, paragraph 4).

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# INTRODUCTION

It is common for students and more experienced scholars entering the complex and fascinating world of David Hume's multi-themed and refined writings to come across his concise text *My Own Life* immediately. Written in April 1776, four months prior to the writer's death, the text telling what Hume considered to be key events of his intellectual and professional life was published for the first time in 1777 by Hume's longstanding publisher William Straham together with an abbreviated preface Straham himself wrote. It was also followed by a lengthy letter the publisher had received from one of Hume's closest friends, Adam Smith.[1] Its first publishing title was *The Life of David Hume, Esq. Written by himself*. Due to its brevity and the fact that it lacks the customary attractions of the autobiographical genre, Hume's self-biographical piece has been sometimes overlooked by scholarship and at others relegated to passing references to it.[2] While the long-lasting academic debate on "writing lives" is proper when arguing *My Own Life* is not an autobiography in the prevailing sense of the term from the 1790s on, the piece provides a means for considering significant aspects of Hume's persona as a philosopher and historian.[3]

As Liz Stanley affirms, Hume's *My Own Life* was not intended to be an autobiography, as a great deal of Humean scholarship has repeatedly suggested. Hume made a clear point when, in a 1776 letter to Strahan, he referred to it as a small piece that had the objective of telling readers "the history" of his own life.[4] Furthermore, shortly before passing away, Hume had fancied the text to serve as the prefix to a new corrected edition of some of his collected works, a material he was revising at the time

[1] HE 1: XXVII–XL.
[2] SIEBERT, Donald. *The Moral Animus of David Hume*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990, p. 388.
[3] TREADWELL, James. *Autobiographical Writing and British Literature 1783–1834*. Oxford: University Press, 2005, pp. 4–11. STANLEY, Liz. The Writing of David Hume's *My Own Life*: The Personal of the Philosopher and the Philosopher Manqué. *Auto/Biography*, v. 14, 2006, p. 4.
[4] STANLEY, Liz. The Writing of David Hume's *My Own Life*, p. 6.

of his death. As the opening section of a forthcoming new edition of the works of a historian and philosopher with an enduring and established career, *My Own Life*'s epistolary character is also destined to offer its addressees a concise history of some of Hume's most prominent writings, including his present-day broadly acknowledged and most best-selling of all: the multi-volume *History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688.*

It is important to emphasize that a hurried bird's-eye-view of Hume's career and solely the reading of *My Own Life* might draw students and scholars to assume that Hume had never formally reflected on history before engaging with his project of writing *The History of Great Britain*.[5] However, this is not the case since particular segments of his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), his first and second *Enquiries* (1748, 1751), as well as several of his existing essays were history texts, writings about history, historical theory and methodology, or deeply historically minded reflections about other subjects. Moreover, those pieces concentrated on pertinent debates, addressing them through historical claims and constructing historical arguments based on the assessment of historical evidence. Among the "historical" essays, examples are *Of the Study of History* (1741), *Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences* (1742), and *Of the Populousness of the Ancient Nations* (1752).[6] As those three essays were published before 1752, they point to the fact that Hume had been engaged with history and theoretical and methodological reflections on historical knowledge before the crucial year of 1752, when the writer openly declared in a letter that he intended to move on with the publication of a three-volume *History of Great Britain,* which would later become his comprehensive and

[5] In My Own Life, the first time Hume mentioned history writing was when he was describing the year 1752 when he was appointed librarian of the Library of the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh. Such a moment was vital for Hume's literary career since in the early- and mid-eighteenth century, almost exclusively citizens with a solid reputation as *homme des letters* secured positions gained through patronage, and that opened doors to the richness of libraries and public archives. See HE 1:XXX.

[6] E 563–569, E 111–137, E 377–464.

encompassing six-volume *History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688.*[7] We can also imply from that same document that Hume evaluated Britain's eighteenth-century historical writing as contaminated by a Whiggish tendency to interpret the preceding century as the critical moment in which the quarrel between the monarch and the House of Commons reflected the latter's resistance to despotic wishes and the historically illegal royal confiscation of certain basic civil liberties.[8]

In that manner, by allowing himself to challenge the standard Whig historiographical interpretation and the efficient party propaganda it generated, Hume believed to have arrived at a new scene of historical thought. Sensing all the preceding national histories of England were inevitably partial—especially Paul Rapin Thoyras' *Histoire d'Anglaterre* (1724–1727) and Laurence Echard's *The History of England: from the First Entrance of Julius Caesar and the Romans to the End of the Reign of King James the First, Containing the Space of 1678 Years* (1707–1720), both considered the standard national narratives in the 1750s—Hume intended to write what he first guessed would be the very first impartial history of Great Britain, which ended up as a history of England since the Roman invasion to the events of 1688.[9] As Victor Wexler suggests, among the principal catalysts of Hume's venture were his desires as a *philosophe* to obtain widespread acclaim as a man of letters and the socially shared perception of the need for an impartial and instructive national history.[10] In fact, an efficient use of the language of impartiality was Hume's most complex rhetorical maneuver in the text. It intended to convince his audience of his standpoints and legitimize his ideas. As this thesis will advocate, when we consider

[7] HL 1:167–169.
[8] HL 1:168.
[9] FRANCHINA, Miriam. *Paul Rapin Thoyras and the Art of Eighteenth-Century Historiography.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022, pp. 180–181.
[10] WEXLER, Victor. David Hume's Discovery of a New Scene of Historical Thought, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, v. 10, n. 2, 1976–77, pp. 185–186.

Hume's previously theorized "mitigated skepticism,"[11] his claims for an impartial eye over human affairs as explained in many different parts of the *Treatise*, and the fact that his present-day skeptical tradition had systematically ignored historical Pyrrhonism, we can grasp why in 1752 Hume seemed to be gazing at a horizon in which he imagined he could be as skeptical in history as he thought he had been in his philosophical methodology.[12]

*My Own Life* may convey the impression that, in the 1740s, Hume had only fancied a wide-encompassing history of England which he ended up not formally sketching because of fear of pursuing a long narrative of more than 1700 years of history.[13] However, four of Hume's early memoranda for the *History* suggest him early drafting the text in the second half of the 1740s and sketching it as starting from antiquity, more likely the Roman times.[14] This way, the early 1750s decision of starting the *History* from the accession of the Stuarts to power in 1603 seems to have been more a choice made by Hume together with his publisher, printer, and other historical agents involved in the translation of the first manuscripts into book form. Living in a place and in an age that highly valued the aesthetic-pedagogical character of history, publishing a history book that focused primarily on a historical explanation of the geneses of contemporary party faction and zealotry was an astute editorial pick. In that context, although the final version of the *History* ended up encompassing the antiquity and the Middle Ages, the decades that followed the Union of the Crowns in the early seventeenth century remained the climax of a project dedicated, among other things, to describing and explaining the origins of excessive polarization and divisive faction in the English society.

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[11] EHU 12.17–34.
[12] PERINETTI, Dario. *Hume, History, and the Science of Human Nature.* Doctoral Thesis. Montreal: McGill University, 2002, p. 8.
[13] HE 1:XXX.
[14] WEXLER, Victor. David Hume's Discovery of a New Scene of Historical Thought, p. 186–187.

Consequently, when defending in the *History* that the two first two Stuarts were in their right and did not act towards a usurpation of an ancient fundamental contract, Hume questioned ubiquitous assumptions in the most famous histories of England broadly sold at bookshops and rented at libraries halfway through the eighteenth century. From Hume's standpoint, due to factionalism, eighteenth-century writers and readers had been prevented from finding proper critical historical distance when looking at their mythologically misinterpreted Constitution.[15] Writing in the middle of the century, a few decades after 1688, Hume strongly believed it was necessary to find proper balance and emancipation from the establishment national historical narratives. As it seems, his main intention was to stimulate readers to walk away from their prejudice and zealotry, encouraging them to understand the pros and cons of the English Constitution from a historical angle.

It should not be forgotten that Hume was not the kind of writer that wanted to arouse a revolution with his text. For him, historically understanding the Constitution was a powerful tool to preserving it and not interrupting the natural flow of progress and civilization with frivolous coups or insurgencies. Long before the writing of the *History,* Hume's reflections on history had increasingly been combining elements of the Scottish Enlightenment's natural jurisprudence with a historical reconstitution of the path that led to the formation of modern Europe, and the *History* very much advanced those considerations.[16] Also, throughout the *History*, Hume generally attempts to evoke readers' sympathy for his situation as an intended impartial writer, one who—rowing against the winds and tides of the prevalent political assumptions of English and Scotsmen, Whigs and Tories, religious citizens and free thinkers—assumed he wrote with proper judiciousness, critical distance, and fine elegance.

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[15] E 502–503.

[16] HAAKONSEN, Knud. Natural Jurisprudence and the Theory of Justice. In: BROADIE, Alexander (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 210–211. FARIA, Pedro. The Structure of Hume's Historical Thought before the *History of England. Intellectual History Review*, 2022, pp. 1–2.

In any case, in constant dialog with secondary literature, this work presents the theoretical contour of David Hume's historical method, understood here as the set of techniques and principles employed by Hume to build his interpretation of history and the historical process. The thesis also follows its implementation and echoes in *The History of England.* As part of the bibliography and previous research allow us to presuppose, several aspects of Hume's historical theory and method had been theorized in a wide variety of his texts before the publication of the first volume of the *History of Great Britain* in 1754. Nevertheless, Hume's historical practice—mainly during the development of the second volume of *The History of Great Britain* and the four subsequent ones that together made the even more comprehensive *History of England*—demanded that the writer adapted and accommodated certain aspects of his previous theorizations.

The work also highlights the usefulness of appraising Hume's considerations as a historical theorist and his intentions as a historian—initially of Great Britain, and then of England—simultaneously with two other factors. First, an analysis of the extent of the influence of external factors such as mounting editorial pressure, the readers' diverse reception of the text, and external criticism on the expansion of his historical project that started as a *History of Great Britain* and later evolved into a *History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*. Second, the pursuit of a contextual understanding of the *History of England* as a product of an intricate interplay of forces among varied poles, such as the writer, his publishers, printers, and present-day readership and scholarship. It is believed that intercrossing these lines of inquiry allow for a refined appreciation of a significant part of the mid-eighteenth-century British historical writing world, underscoring a reflection on the functions of authorship, the editorial market, genre, readership, and scholarship over texts at the time.

In order to achieve its objectives, this thesis is divided into five chapters with two to four sections each. Also, the text was designed to have two different moments.

The first comprises Chapters One and Two, whereas the second consists of Chapters Three, Four, and Five. The main goal of the first moment of the thesis is to offer an overview of the symbiosis between history and philosophy in Hume's thought and the situation of historical writing, the market for history books, and the kind of readership eighteenth-century historians in Britain addressed when they, after intense negotiation, managed to publish their early manuscripts as books. The second moment of the argumentation is more specific and turns to Hume's historical practice in *The History of Great Britain* and subsequently in *The History of England* to show the contours of the historical method he had been developing for quite a few years before finally publishing his principal historical work.

**Chapter One** is the shortest of all five and is entitled *The Moral Philosopher as Historian.* The chapter argues in favor of the fact that there was an intense synergy between history and philosophy in Hume's thought from beginning to end. It also defends that, under a typical eighteenth-century assumption, Hume had the ideal profile for writing a sizeable national history of England. While in the seventeenth century, a retired statesman with expertise in military affairs and first-hand knowledge of the essential rulers and politicians was typically preferred when writing a narrative history of events because of their excellent vantage point for understanding political and military events, in the century that followed, an independent man of letters was also considered qualified for this post, and Hume envisaged such a possibility halfway through his career. Besides, Chapter One also points to the existence of a more or less coherent historical theory, or philosophy of history, dispersed in Hume's early philosophical writings.

**Chapter Two's** title is *Background: A Panorama of Historical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in Britain (c. 1750)* and possesses three key objectives. The first is to show that, throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, publishing a history book was a painstakingly bargained enterprise between a publisher, a printer, a writer, and sometimes other cultural agents. Quite often discourteous, relationships

between those parts were drastically influenced by diverse factors such as social status, cultural authority, and wealth. As part of the bibliography referred to while writing the chapter suggests, the necessary procedure to understanding those relationships is the adequate decipherment of the singular connections and transactions the writers, their publishers, and other agents of the book trade established.

Complementarily, Chapter Two asserts that the triumph of the manuscripts finally translated into book form largely depended on those cultural agents' opinions and performance. Especially publishers could make or break forthcoming books since they used to strongly influence the many adaptations most manuscripts suffered, usually demanding several cuts and suggesting additions. The second objective of the chapter is to show that eighteenth-century histories were affected and shaped by neighboring genres, especially the novel and biography. With more inward inclinations and an angle that privileged private affairs, both directly influenced history's incorporation of the less public scenes of social life at the time. At a last moment, the chapter's goal is to examine the *topos* that conditioned the social perception of history as the most dignified genre of prose literature in the eighteenth century: impartiality. In the analysis the thesis advances, the notion is considered together with its two opposites in most Western European eighteenth-century vernaculars: partiality and indifference. In a nutshell, the final segment of Chapter Two prepares readers to understand why Hume's *History of Great Britain* and subsequently his *History of England* contained both Whig and Tory sympathies, quite often in surprising nearby closeness. And such an eye-catching nearness is explained by the writer's methodological control of the language of impartiality.

**Chapter Three**'s title is *From The History of Great Britain to The History of England.* It focuses on Hume's decision to advance in his ambitious undertaking of writing a three-volume *History of Great Britain*. This part of the thesis argues that even though Hume had extensively reflected on history and historical writing prior to the

publication of *The History of Great Britain*'s first volume, a combination of forces from rather different natures led him to fully engage with the project of writing a long and encompassing history text. Among those factors was his appointment as Keeper of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh in 1752 As many letters and a significant portion of the secondary literature suggest, the library's magnificent collection of over 30,000 volumes allowed Hume to make his historical enterprise viable. In addition, Chapter Three offers an overview of philosophical history, which, with its complex and sometimes complementary relationship with seventeenth-century erudition, became the historical genre *per se* of the Scottish and other European Enlightenments. Furthermore, the chapter situates Hume as a philosophical historian by stressing that philosophical histories were philosophical not only due to genre-related textual issues but also because their causal methods and conclusions, usually pointed to general and universal assumptions, were customarily philosophical. Finally, Chapter Three describes the process that led Hume to abandon his original idea of writing a *History of Great Britain* and the factors that propelled him to settle on keeping himself busy with an extended backward venture of a *History of England* since the Roman Invasion of the island of Great Britain in AD 43.

**Chapter Four** is entitled *The Method into Practice: The History of England.* It focuses exclusively on Hume's historiographical practice in his six-volume *History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*, the expansion of his original project *The History of Great Britain.* The main idea of the chapter is to present the main guidelines, recurring themes, and the final structural division of Hume's principal historical text. Chapter Four also reconstructs Hume's narrative techniques and explanatory devices in the *History.* In the chapter, a mapping of Hume's uses of direct and indirect descriptions, his construction of historical frames, and his modes of historical explanation throw light on how his historical reflection was presented and the extent to which it is approached and distanced itself from other eighteenth-century history texts. In addition, the chapter examines Hume's most useful

rhetorical tools to convey impartiality in his text: the emulation of political debates in the Parliament and other political arenas as well as the fictionalization of key political figures' speeches. On a final section, in close conversation with the last segment of the preceding chapter, Chapter Three approaches Hume's historiographical impartiality, understood as a fundamental epistemic attitude intrinsically connected to what Hume, in the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, defined as mitigated skepticism. As a matter of fact, that sort of skepticism, a peculiarity of Hume's thought, stood as an essential guiding notion to several of Hume's texts, including *The History of England.*

**Chapter Five's** title is *The Method Theorized: Hume's Early Reflections on History and their Echoes in 'The History of England'*. At first, readers might think Chapter Four is misplaced since Hume's methodological theorizations were proposed mainly before the publication of *The History of Great Britain* (1752–1754) and, therefore, prior to the beginning of the printing and commercialization of *The History of England* (1761–1762). However, as more fruitful reading of Chapter Five presupposes specific knowledge of the *History of England* and its publication history, I opted for placing the sections that comprise the fifth chapter at the end of the thesis. In that manner, the thesis' structure was designed so that both Chapters Three and Four present and discuss key historiographical aspects of *The History of Great Britain* and *The History of England* therefore allowing that Chapter Five problematize Hume's theoretical and methodological considerations by constantly referring to *The History of England*.

Chapter Five is divided into four sections and begins with a discussion of Hume's notions of distance and love of truth as essential guidelines to his engagement with history and his justification of historiography. It then moves forward to characterize Hume's historical imagination and its importance in shaping Hume's analyses of factual reality and, consequently, the composition of a credible history. On the first part of its last half, Chapter Five reflects on the connection between general causes and

historical events arguing that in Hume's historical conception an event can only be considered historical if its networks of causation can be revealed or at least inferred from the historical evidence available to the historian. Finally, on its last section, the fifth chapter of the thesis demonstrates how Hume mobilized reflections on evidence and causality in his historical explanations, especially in those contained in the *History of England.*

By and large, at the end of Chapter Five and in the subsequent **Conclusion**, I expect readers to have comprehended a few essential components of Hume's method and its relationship with his original and reframed intentions, especially after the publication of his two-volume *History of Great Britain*. I also hope that the audience can acknowledge the extent up to which his most ambitious and lengthy practice in historiography, *The History of England*, had to be adapted to attend to the market's expectations and to the socially perceived values and functions of history in the midpoint of the eighteenth century. At this point, it is important to clarify that my decision to focus mainly on the echoes of Hume's early methodological reflections on history and the historical process more on *The History of England* and less on *The History of Great Britain* was in great extent because Moritz Baumstark put considerable emphasis on the *History of Great Britain* in his Ph.D. thesis presented at the University of Edinburgh in 2007.[17] As it will be noticed in the footnotes, my reconstruction of Hume's transition from *The History of Great Britain* to *The History of England*, in Chapter Three is, in fact, much indebted to his work.

Another choice I made in the thesis was settling on not to meticulously describe the origins of Hume's historical method in the *Treatise of Human Nature*, as Pedro Faria concentrated on it in his Ph.D. thesis presented at the University of Cambridge

[17] BAUMSTARK, Moritz. *David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian*. *A Reconsideration*. Doctoral Thesis. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2007.

in 2021.[18] Baumstark's and Faria's works were of prime importance to me, and my decision was to dialog with them by covering *The History of England*, where both of them stopped. I confidently expect that my arguments—as advanced in Chapters One, Three, Four, and Five—and my contextualization of eighteenth-century socio-cultural history issues as well as of the constitution of Hume's authorial persona—as proposed in Chapter Two—can be read in a complementary perspective to the ideas portrayed in Baumstark's and Faria's texts. The intention is to contribute to expand the scope of their arguments and dialog with several of their conclusions which, in many ways, were decisive to shape my final text.

Finally, the **Bibliography** is divided into two different segments: David Hume's Works and Other Literature. The selection of David Hume's texts based itself upon the perception that the editions chosen are standard preferences among the scholarship on Hume's thought. Most of Hume's major philosophical works' volumes, especially the *Treatise of Human Nature*, bring critical comments from editors, which allow further analyses and more plausible interpretation of the texts' contents. Besides, regarding the *History of England*'s chosen edition, despite not offering critical remarks, the volumes issued by Liberty Fund, in six installments, have the advantage of being based on the 1777 edition with Hume's last corrections and improvements. Additionally, the conveniently available Liberty Fund version has also been positively reviewed by specialized scholarship many times. In the future, a critical edition of the *History of England* will be much welcome and will undoubtedly help increase the quality of studies on Hume's text.

Under a different perspective, the Bibliography's Other Literature Section brings a selection that comprises mainly books, several articles, and few conference presentations. The chosen texts fundamentally focus on Hume's life, writings, and

[18] FARIA, Pedro. *History, Moral Philosophy, and Social Theory in David Hume's Intellectual Development (1739–1752)*. Doctoral Thesis. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2021.

historical and philosophical ideas from various angles. The deliberate intention was to contemplate the enriching diversity of approaches to his intellectual production. The list of bibliographic references also includes texts on a vast array of subjects such as: the Scottish Enlightenment historiography; philosophy of history, historical theory and methodology, together with their adjacent fields: history of historical thought, history of historiography, intellectual history, and history of ideas; book history; cultural histories of readership; history of modern philosophy; and eighteenth-century texts from present-day authors like Adam Smith, Hugh Blair, and Lord Kames. Optimistically, I believe the past few years' bibliographical surveys, summarized in the Bibliography section, address both the great classics and state-of-the-art references to the execution of an academic research on Hume's historical theory and methodology. The Bibliography also allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the broader context of production and reception of Hume’s most important historical reflections contained in and out of his lengthiest and most well-known historical work.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE MORAL PHILOSOPHER AS HISTORIAN

David Hume was a multi-tasked and resourceful philosophical writer who acknowledged the usefulness of history and historiography to his present time. Among his many contributions to historical studies are deep and refined considerations about history, historical theory and methodology, as well as important additions to the understanding of modern British and European economic, social, and political situations from a historical standpoint. Relatively young, at age 18, in 1729, he experienced a skeptical crisis. He presumed he had reached a frightening "new scene of thought."[19] Close examinations of Hume's early notebooks have led generations of scholars to consent that the philosopher's "new scene of thought" was a heightened awareness of a theory of causality, and the proposal of advancements to it. Hume's notebooks and journals from the 1720s were full of quotations from Pierre Bayle's writings enmeshed with personal comments and thoughts.[20] Immediately after this epiphany, he began working on his first manuscripts and treatises in philosophy. Despite being unsuccessful originally, those initial writings were essential to consolidating his later—and posthumous—reputation as a moral philosopher.

In a subsequent moment of his career, after what seems to have been another nervous breakdown, Hume crossed the Channel to isolate himself in the continent and compose what he assumed to be a novel perspective in philosophy.[21] With eight folio volumes of Bayle's writings under his arms, Hume headed to Paris, then to Anjou, where he spent a couple of years writing his *Treatise of Human Nature*, which was published anonymously between 1739 and 1740.[22] Despite the author's confident

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[19] HL 1:13

[20] POPKIN. Richard H. David Hume. In.: POPKIN, Richard H. (ed.). *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 454.

[21] PENELHUM, Terence. *David Hume*: An Introduction to His Philosophical System. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1992, p. 11.

[22] POPKIN. Richard H. David Hume, pp. 454–455.

expectancy of success, the *Treatise* was a total failure. Therefore, in sequence, he dedicated himself to recasting and re-elaborating ideas from his earlier texts, a characteristic that became an important feature of Hume's thought as a whole. In any manner, during that period, Hume devoted himself mainly to essay writing, a genre to which he resorted to articulate his opinions and theses on philosophy, history, politics, political economy, and commercial matters more simply and straightforwardly. This phase's intellectual products were chiefly Hume's *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (later re-titled *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding*), the *Essays Moral and Political,* the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,* and the *Political Discourses*. Published between 1748 and 1752, those works finally allowed him to partially obtain the literary reputation he had avidly been desiring.[23]

Eventually, in a posterior moment of his career, which intersects with the last one described, he concentrated almost exclusively on history writing. This mid-life turn to history resulted in a narrative account of the Stuart age printed in two volumes, in 1754 and 1756, under the title *The History of Great Britain*. However, due to some close friends' and reviewer's compliments, criticisms, and suggestions, as well as to the imminence of a potentially lucrative contract with his bookseller, the two-volume *History* quickly turned into a more ambitious and more significant undertaking: a six-volume *History of England: From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*.[24] The decision to officially become a historian—and not just a philosopher and essayist who developed plenty of deep historical reflections pulverized in a vast array of texts—catapulted Hume to a bold and worthwhile publishing venture, which turned him into the most renowned historian of England in the eighteenth century. Hume's *History of England* then replaced Paul Rapin de Thoyras' *Histoire D'Anglaterre* (1723–1724) as the standard history of England for several decades, at least until Thomas

[23] PENELHUM, Terence. David Hume, p. 13.
[24] BAUMSTARK, Moritz. *David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian*. A Reconsideration. Doctoral Thesis. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2007, p. 15.

Babington Macaulay published his *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second*, in 1848. Besides, it should be remarked that, as his earlier philosophical works did not sell as expected, his shift to history lifted him from relative facelessness as a philosopher to widespread acclaim as a historian.[25]

In any manner, the chief purpose of this chapter is to outline the coordination of history and philosophy in Hume's thought since the outset of his career. The immediate motivation for writing it lies in the belief that a broad and effective recapture of the significance of Hume's historical works for eighteenth-century intellectual history must proceed from a descriptive analysis of the intimate and intricate relationship between history and philosophy in his so-called "philosophical" and "historical" works. Thus, focusing on the intense synergy between the philosophical and historical standpoints throughout Hume's texts, sections 1.1 and 1.2 refer to distinct moments of his career and several of his writings without necessarily assuming a chronological order of thought. At the end of the chapter, I expect readers to have retained that Hume neither abandoned philosophy to write history nor the opposite because both were eminently present in his studies from beginning to end. Nevertheless, the stress on each varied considerably in distinct moments of his intellectual path, depending on the nature of the text, the subjects approached, and the genre he was experimenting with. As Mark Spencer significantly remarked, it is only by acknowledging the continued concurrency of history and philosophy in Hume's writings, and mapping their preponderance or subordination in each of his texts, that we begin to make sense of the author's canon as a whole.[26]

Consequently, inspired by Hume's two reference biographies, one by Alfred Ayer and the other by Ernest Campbell Mossner, and a more recent intellectual

[25] WEXLER, Victor. David Hume's Discovery of a New Scene of Historical Thought. *American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* v. 10, n. 2, 1976–1977, p. 185.
[26] SPENCER, Mark G (ed.). Introduction. In: *David Hume: Historical Thinker, Historical Writer*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, p. 3.

biography by James Harris, section 1.1 summarizes Hume's career and offers a bird's-eye view of his main works. It also defends that Hume was very conscious of his goals as a historian when, in the mid-1750s, he decided to write the two-volume *History of Great Britain*. The principal argument is that Hume sensed he could earn far-reaching literary fame by composing a wide-ranging national history. To ground such an affirmation, I refer to scholars who claim that eighteenth-century audiences recognized history as a credible, dignified, and pedagogical genre, and that there was an enlarged and profitable market for national history books in Britain at the time.

Differently, section 1.2 brings Hume's views on history and the historical process to the fore. The section argues that Hume significantly reflected on history—both as a chain of threaded events and as what people tell those events were—and the historical process throughout his career. Regarding historical knowledge, section 1.2 defends that, although dispersed in many of Hume's writings, when read together, his reflections on the subject of history articulate a more or less coherent historical theory and philosophy of history. It also reinforces the thesis that Hume believed in the existence of a historical process and that he wanted to undercover its destination, rhythms, patterns, and the historical forces driving it. Finally, the section highlights certain aspects of Hume's relationship with history while briefly discussing topics that will be addressed more thoroughly in specific sections of Chapters Four and Five.

## 1.1. Philosophical and Historical Writing in Hume’s Career

Having lived a life full of turnarounds and marked by the composition of lengthy, complex, and polemic texts, David Hume’s life and works continue to arouse scholarly interest, even after almost two and half centuries of his death. Born in Edinburgh in April 1711 and a member of a minor Border gentry family with a long legal tradition, he started attending university at the age of 12. As other shrewd and precocious teenagers from his present-day, Hume first considered a career in law since pursuing

legal education was the typical and most successful path to obtain a position in the active Scottish public service in the 1720s. However, his aversion to law-related subjects led him to a deep engagement with general learning, fine letters, civil history, and his genuine self-declared passion: moral philosophy. Despite being an avid reader and diligent student with singular talents for writing and an unheard-of erudition, Hume never made it as an academic. Unlike some of his closest and most inspiring friends, more remarkably Adam Smith and Hugh Blair, who soon became lecturers at Scotland's best universities, Hume left university without any enthusiasm for professorial discourse and practice. In a letter written during his literary retreat in France's countryside, he told a friend that professors taught nothing apart from what books did.[27] In fact, due to his early skeptical accounts of religion and other sensitive topics in a territory under pressure from the Church of Scotland's conservative clergy, Hume quickly became the target of popular clamor in the intellectual circles of Edinburgh and Glasgow.[28]

By the second decade of his life, Hume decided that theologians could not give any adequate reasons for believing in the existence of God. Moreover, he was familiar with the harmful, profound, and defining interventions Christian theology had made in skepticism and modern science.[29] Everywhere in the contrasted and diversified products of Hume's intellectual realizations, a singular view of skepticism and a sometimes direct—in others ironic—critique of religion mingle perfectly with the

[27] PERINETTI, Dario. Hume at La Flèche: Skepticism and the French Connection. *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, v. 56, n. 1, 2018, p. 46.

[28] RASMUSSEN, Dennis C. *The Infidel and the Professor. David Hume, Adam Smith, and the Friendship that Shaped Modern Thought.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. Rasmussen makes one of the best accounts of Hume's relationship with the Church of Scotland, see Chapter 4, pp. 71–85. He also analyses how his polemic 'agnosticism' (Rasmussen does not perceive Hume as either a believer or an out-and-out atheist, see p. 13) shaped his career and reception in the 1740s and 50s, see especially pp. 76–77.

[29] PHILLIPSON, Nicholas. *David Hume: Philosopher as Historian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012. p. 6. POPKIN. Richard H. *The History of Skepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 301–302.

languages of moderation, politeness, and sympathy, as well as with claims for a bird's-eye and unbiased view over central aspects of human individual and social affairs.[30] In any manner, in this thesis, Hume's professional accomplishments and academic frustrations—the latter used by many of his contemporary detractors and posthumous critics as arguments to disqualify his most critical and inventive works—are considered together with other mutations and shifts in his existence. Among those movements, his mid-life bend to historical writing is the most appealing of all. It is noticeable that history became the sort of laboratory where he could condensate, test, and try to prove plenty of his hypotheses about human morals, passions, and behavior. As brought to relevance by Victor G. Wexler, history became an essential branch of Hume's studies, and his views on politics, moral values, and epistemology opportunely found their way into his investigations of the past.[31]

From the 1730s on, Hume experimented with different lifestyles in the continent and in Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, and their surroundings. By the early 1700s, Scotland's capital, for instance, had become a place of substantial and far-reaching cultural, economic, political, and social changes. This is why Edinburgh was crucial to Hume's formative experience. The Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707 created a British State and the subsequent years, full of political complexity and power struggles, defined London as Great Britain's definitive political center. [32] Such a dramatic change, combined with an unparalleled economic growth and the urban Scottish intellectual elite's utmost fear of decline and ostracism led to redesigning major aspects of

[30] Irony was a recurring strategy used by Hume and other skeptics (even Christian skeptics) to voice their criticisms of religion. Richard Popkin interestingly considers Le Mothe Le Vayer's irony. See POPKIN. Richard H. *The History of Skepticism*, p. 85. Pierre Bayle's ironic style is also briefly considered by Popkin, see p. 292.

[31] WEXLER, Victor G. *David Hume and the History of England*. Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1976. p. 1.

[32] STUART SHAW, John. *The Political History of Eighteenth-Century Scotland*. London and New York: Red Globe/Bloomsbury Publishing, 1999, p. 38.

Edinburgh's, Glasgow's, and Aberdeen's bustling public and cultural lives.[33] This way, the firm commitment of numerous segments of the city's diversified *intelligentsia* transformed its taverns, coffeehouses, dressing rooms, and salons into centers of discussion on public, economic, and constitutional affairs.[34] As Nicholas Phillipson argued, the city's club culture was sketched to prove that learning and letters could help to expunge present-day destructive political factions and vicious sectarianism.[35] Its renewed cultural environment was also conceived as a means of encouraging the advancement of politeness and the arousal of a patriotic sentiment capable of helping civilize the country and strengthen its independence. Phillipson moreover remarked that the 1710s and early 1720s had also been the time of a reorganization of the university system, accomplished under the intention of attracting students from the middle ranks of society.[36] As a result, Edinburgh quickly distinguished itself from London by becoming a reference of liberal education, famous for offering its youth proficiency in the studies of religion, law, natural and moral philosophy, ecclesiastical and civil history, physics, anatomy, music, and languages.[37]

Regarding Hume's early adulthood, despite moments of urban social activity, countryside personal isolation became a commonplace during the period. Interestingly, those extended retreats often coincided with the long periods of study that culminated in the composition of his first philosophical manuscripts, among which we find his posthumously discovered *Treatise of Human Nature*, some essays, and, possibly, his *Early Memoranda*.[38] Especially the *Treatise*, written in the 1730s and

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[33] PLASSART, Anna. *The Scottish Enlightenment and the French Revolution.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 4.
[34] PLASSART, Anna. *The Scottish Enlightenment and the French Revolution*, p. 4.
[35] PHILLIPSON, Nicholas. *David Hume*, pp. 6–7.
[36] PHILLIPSON, Nicholas. *David Hume*, p. 7.
[37] SHER, Richard B. *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985, pp. 28–30.
[38] MOSSNER, Ernest Campbell. Hume's Early Memoranda, 1729-1740: The Complete Text. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, v. 9, n. 4, 1948, pp. 492–518. There is no agreement about when

after Hume arduously drafted his own theory of causality, required a considerable degree of isolation and the proper conduct of pioneering and controlled thought experiments by the author. Therefore, significant portions of the *Treatise* were composed during Hume's retreat in the town of La Flèche, a city located on France's Loir River Valley, in Anjou, halfway between Le Mans and Angers. Hume chose the spot for a continental hideaway and set out on his trip in July 1734. He headed first to Paris, where he spent some weeks hosted by Scottish-born writer and philosopher Andrew Michael "Chevalier" Ramsay. Hume's letters from 1727 to 1734 show that Ramsay is likely to have been an essential reference to Hume in his early career and an important connection during his early adulthood.[39] Both exchanged letters, translations of quite a few books, and critical comments on each other's writings. Ramsay was also one of the first to hear about Hume's studies of Pierre Bayle, causality, and skepticism.[40]

It was Hume himself who acknowledged the importance of the extended sojourn in France since there he enjoyed tranquility and peacefulness to reflect upon the dense subjects he approached in the *Treatise* as well as free access to the library of the College at La Flèche.[41] Despite being a small town of a bit more than 5,000 inhabitants in the 1730s, La Flèche was the venue of a rich intellectual scene, with the community's life revolving around the *Collège Henri-IV de La Flèche*, a Jesuit college founded in 1603 by Henri IV, king of France from 1589 to 1610, and René Descartes'

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Hume's *Memoranda* were written. Mossner guessed it was a juvenile work written before the *Treatise.* Later, M.A. Stewart suggested it was written in the early 1740s. However, more recently, in 2011, Tatsuya Sakamoto argued in the direction of the *Memoranda* being written in the late 1740s as a preparation for the 1752 *Political Discourses.* SAKAMOTO, Tatsuya. Hume's Early Memoranda and the Making of His Political Economy. *Hume Studies*, n. 37, v. 2, 2011, pp. 131–164.

[39] WRIGHT, John P. Dr. George Cheyne, Chevalier Ramsay, and Hume's Letter to a Physician. *Hume Studies*, v. 29, n. 1, 2003, pp. 134–135.

[40] HL 1:9–12. HL 1:19–21.

[41] HL 1:23.

*alma mater*.[42] It is important to emphasize that most of the scholarship on Hume, in spite of frequent references to the author's continental hideaway, had systematically overlooked La Flèche's intellectual environment until the mid-2010s when Dario Perinetti discovered a 1777 manuscript containing the catalog of the local college library. Perinetti's central claim is that La Flèche was decisive to the *Treatise*'s elaboration because it was there that Hume deepened his superficial knowledge of Antoine Arnaud and Pierre Nicole's Port Royal Logic and got acquainted with the diverse philosophical reflections on history, archaeology, and linguistics contained in the *Memoires de L'Academie Royale des Inscriptions and Belles Lettres.*[43] It was also in La Flèche that Hume read Voltaire's *Lettres Philosophiques* for the first time. The conjunction of those factors allowed Hume to shape his "philosophical attitude towards skepticism."[44] This "French connection"—that reflects a much broader and longer tradition of Scottish-French entente—was furthermore crucial to defining the general lines of Hume's writings in the years that came.[45]

The *Treatise* was Hume's first writing concerning with history in significant ways. Even though it is not an essentially historical text, it made a massive and successful effort to historicize human nature, its behaviors, passions, and social institutions. Most of the literature about Hume's life—especially the two reference biographies cited above by Ayer and Mossner, as well as the more recent intellectual biography by Harris—show us that Hume's curious personality, disruptive aspirations, and intellectual ambitions mistakenly led him to assume the *Treatise* would sponsor

[42] EDELSTEIN, Dan. *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010, p. 106.
[43] FARIA, Pedro. David Hume, the Académie des Inscriptions and the Nature of Historical Evidence in the Early Eighteenth Century. *Modern Intellectual History*, v. 18, n. 2, 2021, pp. 299–322.
[44] PERINETTI, Dario. Hume at La Flèche, p. 57.
[45] EDELSTEIN, Dan. *The Enlightenment*, p. 107.

an intellectual revolution. [46] The three biographers normally agree that Hume was sure his questioning of common contemporary assumptions as well as of the 1700s moral philosophy's methods would rise him to fame and radically transform the studies of human behavior. Unfortunately, the reality of the book's reception fell short of Hume's expectations with the *Treatise* failing to please the larger public of ordinary readers, numerous publishers, and popular booksellers, falling "dead-born from the press."[47] In any way, even with those setbacks, the *Treatise*'s publication by the early 1740s was the main tool for Hume to present most building blocks of his subsequent writings. Furthermore, despite its long-lasting unsuccess, due to its promptly alleged intricacy and entanglement, it should not be overlooked that the *Treatise* triumphed in separating the studies of human behavior from theology—setting the path for Hume's genuinely empirical, skeptical, and secular approaches of investigation.

Hume's next publishing enterprise were his *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, printed in three separate moments in 1741, 1742, and 1747, respectively. Although the *Essays* had mixed reviews, most of them were responsible for systematizing a kind of political science, based upon noteworthy accounts of modern Britain's constitutional, political, and economic cultures. [48] Hume's subsequent published texts were his two *Enquiries*, the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* and the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of the Morals*, the former published in 1748 and the latter in 1751. Both texts tried to grapple with the author's early problems of excessive technicality and enormous density by using more didactic and instructive language. Those attempts were partially successful in bringing Hume closer especially

[46] AYER, Alfred. *Hume: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. MOSSNER, Ernes Campbell. *The Life of David Hume*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1980. HARRIS, James A. *Hume: An Intellectual Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
[47] HL 1:2.
[48] SPENCER, Mark G. The Composition, Reception, and Early Influence of Hume's Essays and Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals. In: COVENTRY, Angela, WALLS, Andrew. *David Hume on Morals, Politics, and Society.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018, pp. 241–244.

to the industrial and urban enlarged readership, ranging from ordinary, middle-class people, to highly educated citizens, chiefly men.[49] The *Enquiries* also provided the audience with explanations about some fundamental mechanisms of the dynamics of British politics, particularly during the Walpolean era.[50] Some of Hume's most prominent commentators accentuate that one of those texts' main intention was to urge the audience to pursue moderation, politeness, virtue, sympathy, wonder, and happiness in a modernized, industrial, commercial, and profoundly polarized society.[51] Based on Hume's prior experience of editorial and publishing disappointments, they comprise decisive exercises of linguistic recasting, reworking, and adaptation, which fundamentally shaped the vocabulary and the tone of his later historical works, mainly *The History of England: from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688* and *The Natural History of Religion*.

When we regard Hume's career in its entirety, it is undeniable that he was one of the many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century multi-versed intellectuals that flirted with various genres of philosophic and prose writings. As put by Stefan Berger, such versatility was a commonplace imperative to the aspiring father figures of European national historiographies, a group to which Hume had avidly been desiring to belong even before writing his colossal *History of England*.[52] In a letter to one of his many correspondents, Hume sensed: "you know there is no post of honor in the English Parnassus more vacant than that of History. Style, judgment, impartiality, care—everything is wanting to our historians; and even Rapin, during this latter period, is

[49] FORBES, Duncan. *Hume's Philosophical Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
[50] FORBES, Duncan. *Hume's Philosophical Politics*, p. 15.
[51] SPENCER, Mark G. The Composition, Reception, and Early Influence of Hume's Essays and Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, pp. 245–246.
[52] BERGER, Stefan. Fathers and Their Fate in Modern European National Historiographies. *Storia della Storiografia*, n. 59-60, 2011. pp. 228–230.

extremely deficient."[53] Part of the scholarship has also suggested that Hume's ambitions with his *History of England* were personal, a sort of compensation for his failure in becoming as prominent and famous as he expected he would with his mainly philosophical works.[54]

A proof of Hume's enduring and stable interest in history and historical writing is the inclusion of segments of reflective notes in most of the works preceding the publication of his *History of England*. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that to achieve success as a historian he benefited from the early 1750s conjecture, with his aspirations converging with those from the present-time British elites. Both north and south of the Tweed, the English and Scottish intellectual circles used to believe that their national historiographical traditions were weak and had, until then, been incapable of producing a complete and impartial narrative of the history of England and Scotland to the high standards of the most prominent ancient historians.[55] In a common comparison between their present-day and ancient literary culture, the 1700s intellectual elites proudly sensed Britain had been able to testify to the flourishing of a Locke, a Newton, and a Dryden while bemoaning its inability to have managed to emulate a Livy, a Thucydides, or a Tacitus.[56]

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[53] TODD, William B. "Foreword" to The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to The Revolution in 1688 by David Hume, edited by William B. Todd. Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1983, pp. XI–XXIII.

[54] PHILLIPSON, Nicholas. *David Hume: Philosopher as Historian*, pp. 52–53.

[55] HICKS, Philip. *Neoclassical History and English Culture: from Clarendon to Hume.* New York: St. Martin's, 1996, pp. 6–13. Miriam Franchina tells us that "there was no shortage of histories penned across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in and on England." However, all fell short of the genre's expectations, especially in terms of impartiality. According to her, before Rapin's and Hume's histories of England, it was believed the Earl of Clarendon had made the most complete and impartial account. Nonetheless, after the publication of his memoirs, in 1702, critics and reviewers raised doubts on his ability to be impartial due to the discovery of Clarendon's underlying "royalist agenda." See FRANCHINA, Miriam. *Paul Rapin de Thoyras and the Art of Eighteenth-Century Historiography*, pp. 112–113.

[56] HICKS, Philip. *Neoclassical History and English Culture*, p. 13.

# *One*

## *The Moral Philosopher as Historian*

Historian Daniel Woolf might be one of the most widely recognized scholars to point out that the cultural profile historians enjoyed in the 1800s cannot be explained under disregard of their insertion in the logic of the marketing maneuvers and publication tactics that prevailed since the previous century.[57] Several decades prior to the publication of the *History*, historical knowledge had risen to the rank of the most refined literary subject in England and Scotland. In that context of history's socially perceived excellence, the broad scope of British readers acted not as passive receptacles, but as active agents, reading, and publicly complimenting or criticizing the texts in specialized magazines such as the Edinburgh Review. Readers also promoted literature reunions in intellectual circles, like the St. Giles Society, and in the bustling cultural scene of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and London, where readers from diverse backgrounds talked about the texts and their authors.[58] As Chapter Two will consider, since the early 2010s, numerous scholars and research groups have mapped the personal registers of readers of histories and the contents of their private libraries, confirming most of Woolf's above-cited conclusions and expanding the scope of research on an enlarged readership's habits. As Richard Sher, Abigail Williams, and, more recently, Mark Towsey have understood it, the enduring popularity of history was part of a larger universe of practices of socialization of knowledge, in which educated readers were expected to hold conversations about their favorite historical characters and episodes.[59]

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[57] WOOLF, Daniel. *Reading History in Early Modern England***.** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

[58] WOOLF, Daniel. *Reading History in Early Modern England***.** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 257–258.

[59] SHER, Richard B. *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and their Publishers in Britain, Ireland, and America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. WILLIAMS, Abigail. *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.
TOWSEY, Mark, *Reading History in Britain and America (c. 1750-c. 1840)*, p. 16.

Under such a perspective, Hume's wide recognition as a historical writer is not only due to his ideas, eminence, and erudition but also to his smart acknowledging of a universe of possibilities for historical writing. Hume's recognition of the importance of establishing healthy relationships and building bridges with the editorial market must be considered too. An example is Hume's publisher and bookseller Andrew Millar, who reviewed the *History of Great Britain*'s and the *History of England*'s original volumes actively opining on certain cuts and additions to then help advertise the selling of Hume's most ambitious historical enterprise. Besides, specialized scholarship has concluded that the social significance of history in Britain in the eighteenth century goes beyond its sense as a polite genre, a topic of social conversation, and a formative element of genteel character. Aside from teaching virtue, truth, decency, orthodoxy, rationality, and humanity, history was also a political genre, in the broadest sense of the term.[60]

Consequently, when considering Hume's goals as a historian, we notice that he had at least two deliberate intentions with his historical texts, especially *The History of England*. The first was to provide the British and Scottish audiences with something not found on the shelves of libraries and bookshops from London to Edinburgh: readable conjectural and philosophical historical writings that were eloquent and direct. Hume's innovative style sent lengthy digressions and dense discussions to the footnotes, leaving the body of the text for narrating varied historical events, the depiction of cultural, economic, institutional, and social historical frames, the portrayal of personal profiles and characters, and for comments on a variety of aspects ranging from subjects as diverse as arts and culture to numismatics and commercial affairs.[61]

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[60] TOWSEY, Mark. *Reading History in Britain and America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. pp. 7–15.

[61] It is important to emphasize that when we consider *The History of England*'s long and intricate publishing history, the digressions made in footnotes were then transported to the back of the volumes, and only minor references remained in the footnotes (i.e., certain sources or documents).

Hume furthermore sought originality of interpretation. Even though some of his historical assessments had already been found in Clarendon's and Laurence Echard's histories of England, Hume was among the first to openly criticize what he understood as a fabled view of England's ancient constitution. As we shall see later, he was—more than any other eighteenth-century historian—responsible for relocating the Tudors and the Stuarts in contemporary historiography. In a posterior moment, he was also one of the first to look at Antiquity and the Middle Ages with the eye of an erudite cultural historian of the civilization in England, problematizing the long duration of key national historical processes from an innovative place in the eighteenth century.

## 1.2. History, Historical Theory, and the Historical Process

As it is widely known, aside from his short essay *Of the Study of History,* published in the first edition of the *Essays, Moral and Political* in 1741, Hume did not write a text, a treatise, or a volume entirely dedicated to anything resembling a historical theory or a philosophy of history.[62] Contrariwise, most of his theoretical reflections on history and the historical process appear scattered around many of his texts, from his *Early Memoranda* to the *History of England*. However, when we read those dispersed theorizations together, they—with their multiple accommodations and reframings—resemble a coherent and sophisticated theory of historical knowledge. Such an affirmation is backed by the circumstance that Hume's theoretical and methodological considerations abound with deep reflections on what he conceived as history, both as the course of events and as the stories people tell about the course of events, as well as the historical process, understood as the course of events in terms

Even though Anthony Grafton suggests Gibbon was the eighteenth-century Enlightened historian to master the use of the footnotes, Hume used them to a great extent, especially in the posterior volumes of the *History,* the ones about Antiquity and the Middle Ages, written in the second half of the 1750s. See GRAFTON, Anthony. *The Footnote: A Curious History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 1–4.

[62] E 563–568.

of an evolutionary, vectorial, movement that allowed the primitive and uncivilized social organizations in Europe to perfect themselves throughout centuries of existence.[63]

At the time Hume had finished writing several of his historical considerations as published in part of the *Essays*, and the first and second *Enquiries*, and was primarily writing his *History of England*, history was still considered a branch of rhetoric, even though not all rhetoricians agreed on how to make compelling historical descriptions, what narrative and rhetorical techniques to use when writing a history, and the methods on which historical practice should be grounded.[64] Despite Hume's ability to develop a style of his own, he did not explicitly question the place to which most rhetoricians, especially his close friends and professors of rhetoric Adam Smith and Hugh Blair, believed history belonged.[65] For him, the kind of storytelling that resulted in a history functioned as a practical discourse with a pedagogical and ethical function: it instructed citizens, especially in political terms, based on examples from the past.[66] Also, from a Humean standpoint, the singularity of history resided in the fact that it was

[63] Hume's views of the historical process as vectorial and directed towards a kind of modernity are visible in several of Hume's essays. Especially, *Of the Liberty of the Press, Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences, Of National Characters, Of the Standard of Taste*, and *Of Commerce* are illustrative of such a fact. See E 9–13, 111–137, 197–215, 226–252, 253–267. It is also important to emphasize that despite Hume's emphasis on the English and British contexts from the mid-1750s on, prior to *The History of Great Britain* and *The History of England*, he had extensively reflected on European processes, many times in comparative perspective. Historical comparison is an essential element of many the *Essays,* especially those referring to political economy. See E 253–365.

[64] Since Hume's historical arguments are largely inspired by an exemplar function of history, his historical examples presuppose a certain stability of the general frames of human experience. Hume's most significant reflection on that is in the second *Enquiry,* when he defines and discusses his idea of habit. See EHU 5.1–9.

[65] Smith and Blair refer to history in several of their lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres. However, the most developed considerations on history, its narrative procedures, and methodological aspects are in Smith's lectures 12 and 15, and Blair's lectures 35, 36 and 37. See SMITH, Adam. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Ed. J.C. Bryce. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985, pp. 61–66 (lecture 12), 78–84 (lecture 15). BLAIR, Hugh. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Ed. Linda Ferreira-Buckley and S. Michael Halloran. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005, pp. 390–401 (lecture 35), 402–413 (lecture 36), 414–424 (lecture 37).

[66] NADEL, George H. Philosophy of History before Historicism. *History and Theory*, v. 3, n. 3, 1964, pp. 304–311. See also THN 2.2.8.18, 2.3.10.12, 3.2.8.4, 3.2.9.3, 3.2.10.7.

based on a set of methodological procedures that enabled historians to select sources, infer the causes of facts from evidence, and, whenever necessary, supply facts and their causes with conjectural judgement.[67] Even though Hume does not articulate his thoughts on history using these words, we can imply he was sure that a historian's main task is to explain events and structures by telling a story that assembles them in a causal concatenation. In this case, history was the coordinated arrangement of historians' appraisal of past events, structures, and their causes preceded by the exam of multiple source materials, from the most diverse natures, available to the historian in the present.

As previously stated, all around Hume's diversified writings, there are several moments in which his reflections on history resemble a consistent theory of historical knowledge. One of them is when he argues that our comprehension of the past is necessarily shaped by the enduring evidence we assess in the present and that our interpretation is always constrained to some level by our biases and prejudices.[68] Particularly regarding historical evidence, he also argued in favor of the importance of building historical explanations based on the scrutiny of the most trustworthy evidence available while also keeping open to the possibility of the discovery of new material that could contradict preexisting views. For Hume, history was an activity subject to constant revision, and he was keenly aware that new evidence could be discovered at any time.[69] It is also important to emphasize that, according to Hume, many dissimilar

[67] The kind of historical reflection Hume was pursuing demanded looking at the factors concerning the transmission of historical information (i.e., testimony oral and written) and the extent to which historical information could be verified through a comparative means of verisimilitude to experience. An excellent reference to Hume's idea of verification by verisimilitude is in Arthur Danto's *Analytic Philosophy of History.* See DANTO, Arthur. *Analytical Philosophy of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965, pp. 34–62. Also see PRITCHARD, Duncan. The Epistemology of Testimony. *Philosophical Issues,* n. 14, 2004, pp. 327–328.

[68] THN 1.3.13.6, 1.3.13.9, 1.3.14.24–25, 1.4.6.6.

[69] Hume's thorough and lengthy process of revision of the *History of England*, especially the additions made as he came across new evidence or interpretation, stand as proof of his views of history as permanently passible of revision. See HOLTHOON, F. L. van. Hume and 1763 Edition

types of evidence could be used as a medium to investigate historical events and structures, including written accounts and oral reports, even though he makes clear that written sources are always more reliable and less susceptible to forgery.[70]

Furthermore, Hume recognized the importance of judging evidence by considering additional layers of reflection such as the perspective of witnesses, chroniclers, and past historians when producing testimonies of the past. In that sense, historians ought to be aware of the circumstances and the enlarged contexts in which those subjects reported their accounts of past facts. For Hume, this contextual awareness enables the historian to identify certain hidden biases which can compromise the dependability of the analyzed evidence.[71] Hume, therefore, concedes that historical evidence can be full of limitations and ambiguities, a factor that pushes historians (or any inquirer dealing with evidence) to count on their inference skills to make total sense of the past reality they investigate and intend to narrate.[72] Hume also highlighted the significance of critical thinking, hesitation, and doubt when dealing with the fragilities inherent to historical data and assumed historians have to be prepared to dramatically change their stories in the face of new information or novel understanding in the course of their activity. Overall, Hume's perspectives on the relationships historians establish with historical evidence emphasize the value of empirical research, critical evaluation, and a refined appreciation of the obstacles and constraints historians face in their practice.

Regarding the historical process, Hume's views on it were heavily influenced by his philosophical ideas about human nature, causation, and empirical knowledge.

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of his *History of England:* His Frame of Mind as a Revisionist. *Hume Studies*, v. 23, n. 1, 1997, pp. 133–152.

[70] THN 1.3.4.2, 1.3.8.8, 1.3.9.12.

[71] Especially throughout the *History of England*'s two first volumes, where Hume had to rely on ancient sources and the testimony of superstitious monks and chroniclers, the dependability of the evidence is openly problematized. See HE 1.1:25, 1.2:84–85, 1.3:132, and EHU 10.20–28.

[72] THN 1.3.11.1–2, 1.3.12.2, 1.3.12.20.

Concerning causation, he believed that historical events and developments are to be understood as a result of causal relationships and their effects. He additionally argued in the direction that those relationships could be reconstructed and justified from an accurate, critical interpretation of evidence in sources and empirical verification of the adequacy of such an interpretation to our experience of the world.[73] In short, Hume's complete historical picture crucially depends on a critical interpretation of sources with the objective of uncovering the general causes that shaped past events and structures.

One of Hume's key insights about the historical process and their causes was his emphasis on the role of human agency in shaping historical events.[74] He believed that individuals and groups could have a significant impact on the course of history and that understanding their motivations and actions is essential to understanding historical developments and their causes. In addition, Hume was also cognizant of the other significant structural and environmental elements that can affect historical events.[75] Hume adhered to the opinion that historians should consider these aspects while examining historical processes because he took into account the powerful influence of economic, social, and political systems in the behavior of individuals and communities. Generally speaking, Hume's reflections on history stress the intricate

[73] EHU 12.29, "It follows that the existence of anything can only be proved by arguments from its cause or its effect; and such arguments are based entirely on experience."

[74] Especially part 3 of the second book of the *Treatise* reflects upon the considerations of tempers and motives in shaping human agency. See THN 2.3.1.1–5, 2.3.1.11–15. Hume's considerations on the will, passion, and reason are also interesting doors to consider the relationship between human agency and events. See THN 2.3.3.1–10.

[75] Chapter 5 will discuss Hume's extended categories of causal explanation. For now, it is essential to emphasize that expanded causal explanation was not a Humean invention. Instead, it was a distinctive feature of the mid-eighteenth-century historiography in certain European traditions. See REILL, Peter Hans. *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1975, pp. 137–147. For Hume's extended horizon of causal explanation prior to the *History of England*, consider E 266 (influence of physical factors over commerce), E 279–280 (influence of factors as diverse as soil, climate, luxury, sloth, and idleness on the refinement of arts), and E 343–348, cf. footnote 1 (Hume's partial adoption of the mercantilist writers' "maxim" that people are more industrious when there are "natural disadvantages to overcome").

interactions between human agency and other significant structural elements while emphasizing the significance of basing historical narratives on empirical data. He also considered the importance of randomness throughout history and parts of the historical process. As we will see in Chapter Four, especially in the *History of England*, particular pulls and pushes of the primary historical process analyzed are explained through chance or randomness. As it will be argued, Hume acknowledged that history is not wholly predictable, and that random occurrences and contingencies can also directly impact how history unfolds.

All in all, Hume's philosophical beliefs on human nature, causality, and empirical knowledge laid the foundation of his historical theory. He concluded that historical events and developments could be understood as the outcome of causal connections between various factors and that moral philosophy and history had to be studied empirically. In general, Hume's historical theory highly estimates empirical data, critical thought, and a sophisticated comprehension of the intricate interaction between human agency and more significant structural factors.

# CHAPTER TWO

## BACKGROUND: A PANORAMA OF HISTORICAL WRITING, PUBLISHING, AND READING IN BRITAIN (c. 1750)

As expressed in the introduction, the primary intent of this thesis is to propose an interpretative analysis of David Hume's theory and practice of a historical method in his *History of England* with reference to his earlier works. This way, Chapter One claimed that Hume's considerations on history emerged scattered around his works acknowledged as "philosophical" and those perceived as "historical." Furthermore, it proposed that history and philosophy are coexistent in the author's thinking from beginning to end. Significantly, it was stressed that the proportionality of history and philosophy in Hume's writings differed from text to text. In its sections, Chapter One also pointed out that Hume had a mid-life turn to history that entirely transformed his career and earned him widespread literary fame.

Adopting a different perspective, the present chapter goes considerably beyond Hume's writings to trace a panorama of the possibilities and certain aspects concerning history writing in England and Scotland halfway through the mid-eighteenth century, when Hume advanced in the process of writing his *History of England*. In order to achieve such a goal, Chapter Two cross-references multiple factors, such as the profile of eighteenth-century readers, the circumstances of the publishing market for history texts, the expectations readers held from historians and their writings, mid-eighteenth-century history's more typical methodological challenges, and a reflection on two fundamental and complementary epistemic notions that conditioned the success of a historical composition in that part of the eighteenth century—partiality and impartiality. In sum, this contextual view will assist us in attaining a better understanding of Hume's historiographical and theoretical ideas because it considers a series of factors that shaped the translation of his early manuscripts into book form,

the challenges posed to Hume's history by the novel and adjacent genres, and how Hume's authorial persona was constructed.

It is a well-known fact that by the 1750s national historiography had already had an extended history in Britain, stretching back—at least in Scotland—as far as the ninth or tenth century.[76] In any way, specifically the historiography produced by the Scottish Enlightenment is argued to have had an unmatched influence on the way history was understood in the island of Great Britain and across the erstwhile British Empire.[77] Notably, the publishing histories of many eighteenth-century history books, like Hume's, Robertson's, and Gibbon's texts, are entangled with other cultural and social processes. Among those are the enlargement of literacy and diversification of Britain's readership, which quickly became a legitimate elective public for a wide array of writings, books included; the stabilization of written culture into a canon of authoritative texts; the growing psychologization of authors as creative individuals who own their works; and, the increased understanding of books themselves as individual and collective properties.[78]

Opening the chapter, section 2.1. proceeds on to map the profile of eighteenth-century readers, the market for history books, and the reality surrounding the constitution of David Hume's authorial persona in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. The starting point is the fact that the last half of the century bustled with crescent demand for books. Accompanied by the surging of numerous publishing houses in London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, the 1750s also witnessed complex and often troubled relationships among writers, their publishers, and other agents involved

[76] ALLAN, David. Identity and Innovation: Historiography in the Scottish Enlightenment. In: BOURGAULT, Sophie, SPARLING, Robert. *A Companion to Enlightenment Historiography* (v. 3). Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013, p. 308.
[77] PITTOCK, Murray G. H. Historiography. In: BROADIE, Alexander (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 258.
[78] WOODMANSEE, Martha. The Genius and the Copyright: Economic and Legal Conditions of the Emergence of the "Author". *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, v. 17, n. 4, 1984, pp. 426–427.

in the production of books. If from the nineteenth century onwards publishing companies and printing businesses became more impersonal, less influential, and increasingly more distant from writers, in the previous century, those market agents followed the texts from their conception as drafts and manuscripts until their posterior and final translation in book forms. As emphasized by Richard Sher and other book historians, eighteenth-century publishers, for example, largely influenced and manipulated raw textual materials not only by printing and binding them, but also by choosing frontispieces, typographies, papers, and formats.[79] The favorable outcome of books, after numerous cuts and additions, crucially depended on the expertise and power of several cultural agents, aside from writers themselves.

In another way, section 2.2. evaluates the challenges posed to historical writing in the eighteenth century. As at the time history lacked the status of a discipline and as the professional historian was non-existent, historical knowledge was diffused through history books and a multiplicity of other channels.[80] Thus, the central objective of section 2.2 is to consider the main compositional guidelines of most histories and what allowed for an understanding of several present-day canonical texts as histories. It also argues that the so-called neoclassical standards of the eighteenth century were the result of accommodations and reframings of particular classical models and notions. Section 2.2 also privileges the understanding that history writing was dramatically affected by the rise and popularity of the novel in the 1700s. Last, much inspired by the reflections of historians such as Mark Phillips and Philip Hicks, this part of the chapter points out to the relevance and significance of treatises of rhetoric and fine letters, such as Adam Smith's and Hugh Blair's, to British historians and their texts.

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[79] SHER, Richard B. *The Enlightenment and the Book*, p. 6.
[80] SULLIVAN, M.G. Rapin, Hume, and the Identity of the Historian of Eighteenth-Century Scotland. *History of European Ideas*, v. 28, n. 3, 2002, pp. 147–148.

Section 2.3 then argues that not only the novel, but also biographies, defined and were defined by history. Long considered a noble and dignified literary genre, biography was also well-known for the examples and lessons it conveyed. Centered on the individual, not the collectivity, biographies were more commonly marketed for female audiences amid the broader reading public. Nevertheless, with the advent of eighteenth-century philosophical history and its incorporation of character paintings, domestic sketches, and private affairs by historians, biographies and histories had their relationships completely transformed. Those tensions and accommodations are the primary focus of the section.

Closing the chapter, section 2.4. concentrates on impartiality as a cardinal *topos* of historical composition in the eighteenth century. Following recent studies on the history of the emergence of impartiality in early modern European vernaculars, especially in England, the section argues that the language and rhetoric of impartiality was an effective strategy to legitimate discourses, especially historical, before an audience. Historians' claims of impartiality furthermore, and very importantly, contributed to the readership's perception of history as a noble and dignified genre of prose writing.

## 2.1. Hume's Authorial Persona among the Readers and the Publishing Market

The construction of David Hume's authorial persona and his books illustrates how tangled and tortuous the balance of power between writers, their publishers, and readers was. However, unlike other present-time figures, Hume noticed that exceptionally fast. In 1737, at 26, a young Hume went on a journey from Edinburgh to London, seeking literary fame and aspiring to publish his freshly written *A Treatise of Human Nature.* In a 2013 Ph.D. thesis presented at McGill University, Gregory Bouchard remarked that Hume spent around three months negotiating and agreeing with publishers and printers on what to castrate from his "religiously undogmatic [and]

metaphysical" *Treatise*.[81] In the end, a calculating and ambitious early-carrer writer was forced to leave a lot of the original content out of the book. The publishers felt some parts were too offensive to potential readers, especially when coming from an inexperienced author with no notoriety whatsoever. Hume admitted in his 1776 self-biographical text, *My Own Life*, the *Treatise* was his most unfortunate literary attempt, one that "fell dead-born from the press."[82] His relationship with his own text was so complicated that he refused to acknowledge it for a significant portion of his life.[83]

In any manner, the most direct consequence of the *Treatise's* failure was Hume's learning from the publishers' demands to ground his philosophy on simpler and more straightforward bases. In that sense, the vast majority of his post-*Treatise* manuscripts explicitly connected his philosophical reflections with ordinary life and everyday experience. Furthermore, those texts were customarily presented in genres understood as more digestible to the public, such as essays and history. As Hume believed, they allowed him to dissert on a broader range of subjects and connect more easily with his audience.[84] Hume's philosophical considerations made in essay and history forms also reflect his relentless ambition of comprehending and describing how humans form their institutions, systems of belief, and improve their lives. Especially Hume's *Essays* were written with the declared intention of passing forward his philosophy and its stubborn, but durable, nature.[85] It should also be remarked that Hume's manipulation of elements of style and his ability to refashion his philosophy allowed him to co-build his books as commodities that shaped his public image and

[81] BOUCHARD, Gregory. The Philosophical Publishing Life of David Hume. Doctoral Thesis. Montreal: Mc Gill University, 2014, p. 13.
[82] TODD, William B. Foreword, p. XXVIII.
[83] BOUCHARD, Gregory, *The Philosophical Publishing Life of David Hume*, p. 14.
[84] WATKINS, Margaret. *The Philosophical Progress of Hume's Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. 2–4.
[85] WATKINS, Margaret. *The Philosophical Progress of Hume's Essays*, p. 3.

legacy.[86] Notably, those wise editorial movements enabled him to deliberately "choreograph his death" as a well-to-do, widely recognized, and controversial author.[87]

Be that as it may, two factors contributed to Hume's success as a writer in the second half of the eighteenth century—the considerable readability of his post-*Treatise* writings and the careful cultivation of his career as an author. Both traits are related to his somehow traumatic first experience with the editorial market. Richard Sher's analyses of Hume's surviving correspondence prove that he actively participated in nearly all moments of his books' publication processes. His demands included requests on the "format, timing, paper, quantity, printing, publishing, and marketing, as well as the textual content of his books."[88] Sher sees the construction of Hume's authorship as showing more than a passing resemblance to the model Michel Foucault described in his essay *What Is an Author?*[89] For Foucault, the modern constitution of authorship was a recent historical process, starting in the second half of the eighteenth century.[90] In that period, there was a movement from seeing writers as just one of the many artisans implicated in producing a book towards the perception that they were the exclusive creators of singular works, legally detaining the rights concerning the originality of their ideas.[91]

Foucault's process of "author construction" emphasized that, in the eighteenth century, part of the readership—more specifically the critics—began to more closely

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[86] BOUCHARD, Gregory, *The Philosophical Publishing Life of David Hume*, pp. 14–15.

[87] Antoine Lilti makes important reflections regarding Hume's and other contemporary celebrity writers' maneuvers to control their reputations within the eighteenth-century literati inner circles. Although his explicit references to Hume are made on the context of his quarrel with Rousseau, Lilti's text offers a wider social history of celebrities and reputations. See Chapter 5, LILTI, Antoine. *Figures Publiques: L'invention de la Célébrite.* Paris: Fayard, 2014.

[88] SHER, Richard. *The Enlightenment and the Book*, p. 45.

[89] SHER, Richard. *The Enlightenment and the Book*, p. 58.

[90] FOUCAULT, Michel. *Qu'est -ce qu'un auteur?*.In: FOUCAULT, Michel. Dits Écrits III, texte n. 258, p. 792.

[91] WOODMANSEE, Martha. On Author Effect: Recovering Collectivity. On Author Effect: Recovering Collectivity. In: *Cardozo Arts & Entertainment Law Journal, n. 10, 1997,* pp. 279-280.

associate writers and their texts, *l'homme-et-l'oeuvre*, thus transforming the writer into a psychologized entity, a proper name, who originally enunciated the contents of a literary text.[92] Not only readers dramatically influenced Hume's authorial construction, publishers too. Hume's consciousness of his desire for popularity as a writer led him to skillfully stimulate the packaging and repackaging of his texts as books to be available in many forms and prices, attracting multiple readers. By the early 1760s, while Hume was still alive and directly influencing his texts' printings, readers easily found the *History of England* in an eight-volume quarto edition, on "small Paper," on a multiple-volume octavo edition, or in ten quarto volumes.[93] Those formats ranged in price from £2.8s. to £9.3s., attracting both middling-sort and well-to-do readers.[94] Quite soon, book buyers started associating the name David Hume with an organized body of discourse suited for everyone, housed in various material forms, from the simplest and cheapest to the most sophisticated and ultra-expensive.

As a consequence, there is no doubt the expansion of publishing, the growth of the reading public' interests, the advent of lending libraries and coffeehouses, the increasing financial compensation for eighteenth-century authors, the ebb of censorship and repression, and changes in copyright laws determined Britain's cultural development through book reading at the time. While multiple forms of censorship prevented continental Europe's printing cultures from expanding rapidly, the opposite occurred in the island of Great Britain. A great number of printing offices and bookshops allowed the circulation of plenty of approachable reading material such as pamphlets, periodicals, newspapers, magazines, and books. Especially books were becoming objects of desire and symbols of an increasingly educated society that had been learning to cultivate the habit of reading fiction, poetry, drama, history, political economy, philosophy, and other sorts of polite literature. Scots typically associated

[92] FOUCAULT, Michel. FOUCAULT, Michel. *Qu'est -ce qu'un auteur?*, p. 792.
[93] TODD, William B. Foreword, p. XIX.
[94] TODD, William B. Foreword, p. XIX.

with the Enlightenment "provided British publishers with their most prestigious and potentially lucrative raw materials for books, while publishers provided Scottish authors with opportunities for international fame, glory, and wealth."[95]

In that manner, it is vital to remark that the eighteenth century was a turning point for the emerging culture of history reading in Great Britain. By the mid-1700s, historical information was basically everywhere, predominantly gathered at home rather than at school.[96] History, in the broadest sense of the term, could evidently—but not exclusively—be found in present-time best-sellers, that quickly became increasingly popular at bookshops, book clubs, different kinds of libraries, and private lending collections. Centered around libraries, chiefly private, subscription, circulating, religious, and endowed, the urban and vibrating Georgian book culture made for the existence of at least one of them, or some kind of lending collection, in most British towns by 1750.[97] Those were spaces for polite interaction and structured sociability around texts, especially history books. Minute books of libraries, especially the subscription ones—mostly established in the second half of the century, show that local gentlemen ambitioned to catapult a cultural renaissance in their communities by facilitating the purchasing of valuable books on history, voyages, and belles lettres.[98] Therefore, analyses of eighteenth-century catalogues make plain that among the most popular writings within the readership figured alongside: Hume's *History of England* (1754–1761), William Robertson's *The History of Scotland* (1759), Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788), Adam Ferguson's *The History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* (1783), and Georges Louis

[95] SHER, Richard B. *The Enlightenment and the Book,* p. 11.
[96] TOWSEY, Mark. *Reading History in Britain and America,* p. 3.
[97] ALLAN, David. Reading Hume's History of England: Audience and Authority in Georgian England. In.: SPENCER, Mark G. (ed.). *David Hume: Historical Thinker, Historical Writer*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, p. 107.
[98] TOWSEY, Mark. *Reading the Scottish Enlightenment: Books and their Readers in Provincial Scotland, 1750–1820*. New York: Brill, 2010, p. 56.

Leclerc, Comte de Buffon's encyclopedic *Histoire Naturelle* (1749–1804).[99] Those and other few books were recognized as typical elements in the surging canon of historical texts to which segments of the learned elites and the enlarged rank of middle-class professionals recurred in the search of examples, instruction, and amusement.

British contemporary historical culture, however, went far beyond scholarly works. Therefore, a wish to make sense of a moment in which the role and function of historical writing and the self-understanding of the writer of history was so unstable, requires ever more knowledge of the articulations among the popular, erudite, and academic cultures as well as their aesthetic, cognitive, and political impact on the 1700's history texts.[100] Since history was (and still is) a part of social reality and not a mere reflection on it, British eighteenth-century historical culture was very expanded.[101] In that sense, readers could also come across historically driven interpretations in ingoing sentimental narratives and epistolary texts like Helen Maria Williams' *Letters Written in France, in the Summer of 1790 to a Friend in England* (1790–1796) and Samuel Ancett's *A Circumstantial Journal of the Long and Tedious Blockade of Gibraltar* (1783). With their inward character and authentic experiments in a spectatorial narrative, Williams' and Ancett's works widened the scope of questions addressed to the past and stood as proof of the eighteenth-century historiographical representation's augmented range of methods.[102] It should not be forgotten that history also informed the texts of other well-known contemporary writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Hamilton, and James Mackintosh in distinct ways. All those texts circulated mostly in book form, often formatted, and segmented

[99] ALLAN, David. Reading Hume's History of England, p. 108.
[100] SULLIVAN, M.G. Rapin, Hume, and the Identity of the Historian of Eighteenth-Century Scotland, p. 147. GREVER, Maria, ADRIAANSEN, Robert-Jan. Historical Culture. In: *Bloomsbury History: Theory and Method Articles.* London: Bloomsbury Publishings, 2021, pp. 1–4.
[101] RÜSEN, Jörn. *History: Narration, Interpretation, Orientation.* New York: Berghahn Books, 2005, pp. 4–5.
[102] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, p. 92.

for different audiences. Hume's *History of* England, for example, had edited versions full of cuts, for children and Christians. In any way, it was common for the general public to read history texts diligently, keeping accurate notes of their readings, talking and sharing their opinions with others. The broadened eighteenth-century readership also disputed interpretations and took ownership of what they had previously read, writing compiled histories, and introducing and rejecting elements in their brand-new narratives.[103]

Some of those works, especially Hume's, Robertson's, and Gibbon's, were later sacralized as notable creative and intellectual improvements of the Enlightenment and their literati.[104] Intimately associated with philosophy, their works were widely advertised and sold as an extension of the philosophic mind backwards—as an empirical enterprise designed to unveil the well-hidden truths of the past.[105] However, despite the solemn aura contemporary and posterior canonization gave them, the reality behind those books in the second half of the eighteenth century was different. They were also artifacts encountered daily by readers from a broad spectrum of social and educational backgrounds. As mediators of certain practices of polite socialization, ordinary people could find them in communal parts of the houses and out of home, in cafes and dressing rooms, for example. As Mark Towsey suggests, when thinking about those texts and trying to capture the full range of functions they exercised two and a half centuries ago, twenty-first century scholars profit from

[103] TOWSEY, Mark. *Reading History in Britain and America,* pp. 2–3.
[104] SHER, Richard. *The Enlightenment and the Book,* pp. 61–63. Richard Sher observes the Scottish men of letters, David Hume included, commonly referred to themselves as "the literati". They did so in "an almost corporate sense", very much the way French men of letters called themselves "philosophes".
[105] BLACK, John B. *The Art of History: A Study of Four Great Historians of the Eighteenth Century.* London: Routledge, 2018, pp. 20–21.

temporarily removing them from associations with the Enlightenment, regardless of how it is defined.[106]

Thus, more recent scholarship on book history argues in the direction that that history books were more than a one-dimensional product of polite textual genres. Those materials were everyday articles that served other functions aside from offering subjects for pleasant conversations and guiding a genteel personality formation. As suggested in section 1.1, History was a broad political genre that taught virtue, truth, decency, rationality, and humanity. Nonetheless, it also provided people "a lens through which events, beliefs, and opinions could be filtered" and helped readers "negotiate a rapidly changing world marked by social change, global entanglements, and social revolution."[107] In that sense, history contributed to an understanding of Britain's disputed notions of the past in a century full of political controversies. By and large, historical reasoning seemed to be one of the keys to help citizens make sense of Britain's contemporary domestic politics with its recent dynamics of party and factional struggle.[108]

Readers' reactions to texts frequently tell us about their individual experiences while reading, and sometimes furnish us with more significant information, such as an image of a collective perception of an author's or genre's reputation. Then, scrutinizing a wide number of Hume's *History of England* surviving editions and other commonplace books, David Allan concluded that a significant number of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century history book readers constantly annotated in the books they read.[109] It did not matter whether the book was personal or shared;

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[106] TOWSEY, Mark. *Reading History in Britain and America,* p. 4.
[107] TOWSEY, Mark. *Reading History in Britain and America,* p. 24.
[108] SKJÖNSBERG, Max. *The Persistence of Party: Ideas of Harmonious Discord in Eighteenth-century Britain. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press*, 2021, pp. 174–176. Hume also uses his more historically-minded essays as tools to intervene in the political debate about factionalism. See WATKINS, Margaret. *The Philosophical Progress of Hume's Essays*, p. 8, pp. 16–18.
[109] ALLAN, David. Reading Hume's History of England, pp. 110–114.

history reading intensely stimulated notetakings. In any way, it should be remembered that those observations were usually from two opposite natures: appreciation or disregard. Particularly the latter are appealing materials for historians, since it was common for depreciative readers to confront author's statements and insinuations through the construction of a fragmented parallel narrative in the books' pages, front and back covers. History was a genre that amplified sentiments in its readers. As it could form, strengthen, and change opinions, historical discourse was constantly appropriated and debated in inflated forms, capable of generating visceral antipathies, sometimes far from their Enlightened authors' original intentions of arousing moderation and politeness.[110] Hume's *History*, for example, was many times recognized as subversive, provocative, and cynical.

As a matter of fact, David Allan and Mark Towsey are two historians that dedicated significant parts of their research to assessing the role played by histories in the lives of the eighteenth-century readers. According to them, in the Georgian and Victorian eras, young children from the middle and highest ranks of society started learning about the past in the nursery, where they were exposed to basic English and classical history. As they became older and grew more critical of the world around them, it was common to see adolescents and young adults looking for less childish, more impartial, and complex books that would "take them deeper into the past."[111] It is vital to remember that, at the time, knowledge about history was gathered from books, and the pedagogical lessons history taught were first assimilated by aristocracy and an ever-growing middle class in childhood and teenagehood to be later deepened and perfected. Furthermore, Towsey's studies remarkably show that a complex pedagogical debate flourished in the second half of the eighteenth century, and there was a general agreement that history was relevant to all citizens' educations. For

[110] ALLAN, David. Reading Hume's History of England, p. 112.
[111] TOWSEY, Mark. *Reading History in Britain and America*, pp. 26-27.

example, reading history was considered a valuable use of time for the Pennsylvania Gazette. Hester Chapone, an English writer of conduct books for women, asserted that a mind informed by history would stimulate industriousness, virtue, and religion. Lord Bolingbroke and Lady Sarah Pennington believed history's examples encouraged a healthy emulation of their best lessons. Lastly, Peter Williams, the chaplain of Christ Church College in Oxford, argued that history aroused rational thinking by helping its readers develop the ability to observe connections between cause and effect and teach them to infer and deduct.[112]

Scholars have long emphasized that gentlemen with a busy public service life primarily read history. Still, research like Allan's and Towsey's on history and its eighteenth-century readership has proved that by the 1750s, the genre had already spread its popularity, becoming trendier among literate women and teenagers of all social ranks. Denser books, such as Hume's and Robertson's histories, were usually prescribed to youngsters over 13 years old. However, a thorough analysis of conduct writers, pedagogical handbooks, and reading manuals reveals that although classical history was part of grammar schools' curricula and universities, modern history was not. In that sense, if individuals intended to expand their knowledge of later periods, they had to read books. Published advice about the utility of history and how to read histories to the best effect circulated widely in Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century and surviving notebooks prove this advice was conscientiously taken up.[113] Studies of David Hume's *History of England*'s reception not only in Britain but also in Ireland and North America, evaluated readers' surviving notebooks, reviews by periodicals, and reading societies' registers. They revealed that, despite the audience's responding to the same books in very disparate ways, especially note-

[112] TOWSEY, Mark. *Reading History in Britain and America*, pp. 26–28.
[113] ASSIS, Arthur Alfaix. Bolingbroke, a Política e os Usos da História. *História da Historiografia: International Journal of Theory and History of Historiography*, v. 11, n. 28, 2018, pp. 304–318.

taking journals routinely contained transcripts of pedagogical passages, drafts of chronological outlines, and reflections overflowing with parallels with their contemporary societies.[114]

While older students commonly left university with consistent history reading advice, those who lacked a college education found analogous guidance at private collections, book clubs, bookshops, reading societies, and subscription, church, circulating, institutional, and coffeehouse libraries. As they were customarily in charge of domestic education, mothers also played an indispensable role in disseminating historical knowledge. Being the first to introduce history books to their children, female parents read them aloud, proposed memory exercises, and progressively self-studied more refined books to prepare for their children's future reading supervision sessions. Overall, if English and Scottish eighteenth-century history writers wanted to be successful, they had to consider the enlarged reading audience they were targeting. As Karen O'Brien argued, eighteenth-century historians' alertness to their audience "give unusual literary depth and complexity to their historical practice." [115] Still according to O'Brien, for Hume and other national historians, it was their readers' responses to their history and the histories of their history which "constituted the national community itself".[116]

Besides considering their readers, historians also had to navigate the rough waters of present-day print culture. At the time, the movement from the writers—and their texts—to books was an arduous and knotty act since publishers played a leading role. Given the intricacy of the relationship between authors—what Richard Sher wisely noticed that Samuel Johnson defined as "the first to writers of anything"—and their publishers, the 1700s English and Scottish intellectual scenes are certainly less

[114] TOWSEY, Mark. *Reading History in Britain and America*, pp. 32-35.
[115] O'BRIEN, Karen. *Narratives of the Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 5.
[116] O'BRIEN, Karen. *Narratives of the Enlightenment*, p. 5.

comprehensible apart from their published books. In the latter's case, several factors stimulated scholarly and cultural lives north of the Tweed: bustling clubs, cafes, learned societies, and a rich creative heritage. Yet, the possibility of expressing themselves in print brought Scottish authors their desired fame. Edinburgh's, Glasgow's, Aberdeen's, and London's print cultures allowed them to be internationally read, spreading their personal and their homeland's fame. The 1700s "print boom" made literature a commodity sold in multiple shapes and sizes, and Britain as a whole "found itself awash with print."[117] From the second half of the century, science, moral philosophy, political economy, history, and other scholarly books underwent a "popularization" process, being printed not only in expensive quarto formats but also in smaller and more affordable octavos and duodecimos. Eighteenth-century books were extensively printed, reprinted, fragmented, reshaped, pirated, and anthologized. Hume's *History* is an example of text that went through many simultaneous processes of revision and republication on different grades and sizes of paper. Although the quarto editions conferred respectability and honorableness to the writer, by the mid-1760s, the *History* was, more often than not, bought in installments and smaller formats.[118]

All in all, Scottish eighteenth-century writers were free workers and self-reliant individuals who did not have close ties with organizations, sponsors, or donors. Nonetheless, as indicated, the public who consumed their books and other cultural mediators such as reviewers and publishers largely influenced them. The conclusion is that more than abstruse and otherworldly beings, those subjects played a vital role in shaping the reading materials they read and commercialized. Especially in the case of narrative and conjectural history, the most best-selling authors formed a canon that

[117] SHER, Richard. *The Enlightenment and the Book*, p. 2. PORTER, Roy. *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*. London: Penguin, 2000., p. 87.
[118] SHER, Richard. *The Enlightenment and the Book*, pp. 50-52.

retained its prestige until the mid-nineteenth century.[119] Living in a time marked by their recognition and prominence in the editorial market, many history writers became famous and wealthy. Hume and Robertson made £6,000 and £4,500—over £400,000 at today's values—respectively form the print and commercialization of their histories.[120]

In general, the publishers were ultimately responsible for giving authors like Hume the necessary coherence to succeed editorially. Writers' ideas, intentions, and methods were of course crucial and remain a decisive source material for intellectual historians; however, without a competent publisher behind the original authors, they were less likely to become canonical and universally read. Publishers made books viable by negotiating with writers, paper suppliers, binders, and printers. If in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a literate elite extensively read manuscripts, by the mid-1700s, the larger reading public sought books, particularly in smaller and more economical formats. As observed by Robert Darnton, eighteenth-century books' communications circuits became longer and more intricate, and forming a picture of how they worked allows intellectual historians to understand another dimension of the writers they are working with.[121]

## 2.2. The Rise of the Novel and the New Challenges Posed to History

Regarding writers and historical writing in Britain, the second half of the eighteenth century was a time of inventive experiments with forms of presentation, contributing to the enlarged number of historical genres available. At the time, the challenges posed to history were much alike the ones other kinds of literature of social description, political economy, and moral philosophy faced. However, in history's case,

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[119] EMERSON, Roger L. Conjectural History and Scottish Philosophers. In: *Historical Papers*. v. 19, n. 1, 1984, pp. 65–66.
[120] PITTOCK, Murray G. H. Historiography, p. 264.
[121] DARNTON, Robert. *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991.

the demands for reframing and adaptations substantially modified a few age-old central conventions. By 1750, history had ceased to be exclusively shaped as a traditional authoritative political narrative, and nowhere else "was the formal problem of narrative so significant" to a genre's continued identity.[122] Moved by that belief, around half a century ago, Leo Braudy—much inspired by Ian Watt's 1957 well-known *The Rise of Novel*[123]—designed an explanation for such a fact. According to Braudy, the key to understanding history's linguistic changes and narratological accommodations in the eighteenth century demands a careful assessment of the emergency of the novel as we know it and the fact that it challenged history's hegemony as a literature that aimed to offer its readers a plot of human life facts while giving an appealing and convincing narrative form to those experiences narrated, regardless of "whether observed directly or through the records and 'memorials' of the past."[124] As Braudy suggested, Henry Fielding's early novel *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, Hume's *History of England* and Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* have more than a merely wordy similarity in their titles.[125]

The resemblances between history and the novel lied mostly in the fact that, around the 1750s, quite a few history writers in Britain had already distanced themselves from the ancient Thucydidean ideal of overemphasizing political events to start considering culture, social relationships, the geneses and developments of various institutions, commerce, learning, and arts. One of the finest examples of that renewed historiography is Robert Henry's lengthy and effortful *History of Great Britain from the Invasion by the Romans under Julius Caesar* (1771–1790). As suggested by

[122] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment,* p. 7.
[123] WATT, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding. Berkeley and Los Angles: University of California Press, 1957.
[124] BRAUDY, Leo. *Narrative Form in History and Fiction*: Hume, Fielding and Gibbon. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970, p. 3.
[125] BRAUDY, Leo. *Narrative Form in History and Fiction*, pp. 3–4.

Mark Phillips, the most distinctive feature of Henry's text is its structure.[126] Quite revealing of the tensions that shaped eighteenth-century British historiography, the author's planned architecture demanded that he gave his readers seven coordinated narratives, each comprehending a chapter, for each depicted period. Moreover, each of the seven chapters was structured around one of a broad range of particular and diverse themes, varying from subjects as disparate as military history and meticulous descriptions of language, dress, diet, arts, and manners.

In any way, halfway through the eighteenth century, the bold attempt to write about a believable and coherent reality, pertinent and truthful to their readers, brought historians and novelists closer to each other. Seeking a very specific sort of realism, both parts defended that the worlds their discourses imagined were based upon provable facts and presented in the concrete language of general moral percepts, capable of portraying a vast array of human experiences. As Braudy forcefully asserted, the realism that was characteristic of eighteenth-century novels and histories did not reside in the kind of life they presented but in the linguistic way they did it.[127] Under such a perspective, both history and the novel tried to distinguish themselves from whimsical forms of narrative through arguments, exemplification, patterns of factual authentication, careful descriptions, and the composition of plausible contextual ambiences to the actions and events narrated. The main purpose was to concede truthfulness and verisimilitude to the narrative. Eighteenth-century novelists, and particularly historians, were constantly combating fanciful views of human experiences, as those in popular medieval monkish chronicles and ancient tales. For instance, Hume's *History of England* volumes I and II—concerning the histories of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages—overflow with critical and ironic comments on the

[126] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, p. 3.
[127] WATT, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*, p. 13.

mythological and fantastic testimonies of monks, biblical, and pagan leaders from the past.

Nevertheless, despite their similarities, a remarkable mid-eighteenth-century feature that distanced the novel and history—one that became much more evident in the century after—was the forceful incorporation of source criticism and the diversification of "objective" techniques to gather and assess pertinent information on the factual world before translating it in textual form. Historians like Gibbon and Hume modified the manner their present-time audience perceived the historian's role as a mediator between past and present. By rejecting any systematic explanation that claimed outright truth and perennial relevance, Gibbon and Hume narrated and explained the past in artistic, strong, vigorous, and method-oriented ways. For them, the problem of writing history was both a methodological and literary issue. Gibbon's and Hume's histories are about control and coherence: control of the sources—by rightfully unveiling the networks of causation and identifying the general principles they contain—and their subsequent transformation into a coherent, cause-oriented, entertaining, and interesting text. Their final compositions were designed to be capable of arousing the pleasures of imagination in an audience that enjoyed reading the novels and stories of Marivaux, Lesage, and Marmontel with the same diligence and interest they consumed the histories centered on real events, their causes, and other surrounding circumstances.[128]

In any manner, if on the one hand, eighteenth-century British historians were disruptive in abandoning the exclusivity of political-military history written on humanist lines; on the other, their ultimate respect to linearity and chronological ordering—history's identifying marker—remained strong. Consequently, their histories were works shaped in chronological form, filled with new and diverse subjects, and derived

[128] BREWER, John. *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997, pp. 78–79.

from renewed methods. In other words, it is undeniable that many post-Renaissance models of historical writing inherited from ancient traditions the idea that history ought to be written as a linear narrative of public affairs. Moreover, state politics furnished history with a consistent and distinguished matter, expected to instruct public and political agents in their duties. Robert Henry, David Hume, Edward Gibbon, and William Robertson wrote their histories of Great Britain, England, Scotland, and the Roman Empire deeply influenced by that inheritance. Nonetheless, all of them also experimented—in different levels—with other patterns of historical representation, such as social and cultural history, attempting to make history more multiform and varied. Writing and publishing in the mid- and late-eighteenth century, Henry, Hume, Gibbon, and Robertson knew readers expected history to respond to a broader scope of questions that did not fit the excessively definite contours of a concerted history of public events.

Adam Smith and Hugh Blair, professors, and close friends of many present-day historians, organized some of the challenges faced by historical composition in the eighteenth century in their respective *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres.* Smith's and Blair's lectures aimed at offering theoretical guidelines and methodological cohesion to contemporary writers', historians included, literary compositions. As eminent figures among the Scottish and English literati, especially history writers, both Smith and Blair advised their students by commenting on the difficulties in portraying disparate dimensions of experience, a feature usually neglected by mainstream early-eighteenth- and seventeenth-century historians and historically minded philosophers. In the case of Smith, even though his lectures were never formally published and the text we have today is based on students' notes from 1762 and 1763, letters exchanged between Hume and Smith reveal that the former was familiar with the latter's views on historical composition.[129] And even if Hume challenged some central conventions

[129] HL 1:126; HL 1:176; HL 1:168.

defended by Smith, the Smithian theory of narrative which, as we will see, derived from his extended reflections on the natures of literary discourses greatly impacted Hume. Alongside other local writers of the time, both worried about artfully mingling life's political, social, and sentimental patterns of causation in the historical text.[130]

Hume's *History of England,* like Robertson's *History of Scotland*, is then a narration of the main political, social, and cultural events the writer chose to address—the ones he understood as indispensable for understanding the political constitution of the nation, the social aspects surrounding it, and the representation of the main characters' emotional states and responses. When reading the four Smithian lectures pivotal to historical composition, his aversion to any scheme risky to the linearity of the narrative is immediately noticeable. From Smith's standpoint, historians were supposed to bypass anything drawing them away from the most distinctive feature of historical composition: the linear ordering of events. As put by Mark Phillips, Smith was a literary conservative who insisted that historians stick to a narrative closer to the ancients', avoiding too many philosophical digressions and the excesses that historical writing's disruptive experiments could create.[131] Despite Smith's fine reputation in Scotland's and England's literary circles, several historians did not share his literary purism. Dugald Stewart, for example, as well as Robertson, Henry, Hume, and Gibbon, challenged many of his practical guidelines. Their texts quickly became sophisticated pieces that constantly recur to different narrative levels, and non-narrative moments as well, in their many chapters and appendices. A birds'-eye view of eighteenth-century collective authorship construction shows that those writers were constantly dealing with multiple forces and tensions, negotiating their writing intentions and narrative experiments with critics, rhetoric professors, publishers, and printers. As

[130] HL 1:168.
[131] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment,* p. 82.

stated before, all those cultural agents had a say—and considerable power—over the contours of the final text.

Smith's narrative theory clearly stated that discourses are either didactic-rhetorical or narrative, the former designed to prove some proposition and the latter to relate and describe some fact. For Smith, only the second kind, narratives, represented the historical mode of composition.[132] Disagreeing with Smith, Hume often attached discursive passages to his historical text, narrating a story—mostly one of political events—while also describing the surroundings of those happenings, exploring their causes, occasionally straying to refer to the customs, manners, and culture of the English people throughout time. Hume's narration of Edward III's reign (1327–1377) is a remarkable example of that blend[133]. The half-a-century Edward governed as king of England and Lord of Ireland occupies two long chapters of Hume's *History*. After his father's unfortunate rule, the monarch's accession to the throne is told politely and directly, with almost no digressions or explicit critique of sources. The events, as described by French chronist Jean Froissart (in his fourteenth century *Chroniques*), English antiquary and historian Thomas Rymer (in his colossal *Foedera*), English compiler Robert of Avesbury, and other less referenced sources are organized following a chronological order and chained to reach a climax: the king's death and the end of an era. The king's life is recounted mainly by his achievements and failures as a political and military leader, having fought in Scotland and France in The Hundred Years' war.

Whatever the case may be, the varied features of the historian are made more apparent at the end of the second chapter of Edward III's reign, when Hume diverts from the main narrative to delineate what he calls the "miscellaneous transactions of

[132] SMITH, Adam. *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 25.
[133] HE 2.15:182.

this reign."[134] Hume opens the section by referencing one of the historians that inspired him to compose his history of England: William Robertson. Robertson, whom Hume evaluates as "an elegant historian,"[135] is one of the mid-eighteenth-century Scottish history writers that took on the challenge of telling stories and depicting experiences outside the sphere of public and political affairs. Hume's and Robertson's techniques accommodate those detailed socio-cultural reflections at the end of a chapter or in appendices. The result is a combination of political history with a view of manners and conditions standing halfway to antiquarianism.[136] The conclusion is that Hume's historical texts, especially his *History of England*, are not standard political narratives of change all the while.[137] Although predominantly narratological and attributing significant focus to political movement and transformation, they abound with non-narrative moments which are revealing of Hume's perception that there is history and historicity beyond the traditional conception of historical narrative. Hume's descriptive frames of manners, characters, and learning, for instance, presupposed meaningful historical constancy and stability over time. At any rate, that does not mean Hume fully abdicates from describing change and mutations in those segments of his texts. He just adapted the text's flow, which became different since an account of a "slow-motion" social or cultural process demands distinct techniques from those used to narrate dynamic, divisible, events.[138]

This is why several scholars on eighteenth-century historical writing argue that historians were constantly swinging between the attention of two distinct audiences at the time. One was the general literary public, whereas the other was a limited expert

[134] HE 2.16:273–284.
[135] HE 2.16:173.
[136] MOMIGLIANO, Arnaldo. Ancient History and the Antiquarian. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes.* n. 13, 1950.
[137] On "narrative essentialism", see KUUKKANEN, Jouni-Matti. *Post-Narrativist Philosophy of Historiography.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 72–76.
[138] On non-narrative forms of presentation, see ASSIS, Arthur. *Plural Pasts*, section 5.

public, to whom writers imagined additional layers of evidence, a more abridging sense of causation, and different "textual rhythms" proved to be particularly significant. That swing became clearly visible in the diverse narrative and non-narrative modes of historical presentation which are detectible in many eighteenth-century historical texts and of which Hume's *History of England* stands a fine example.

### 2.3. History, Biography, and Entertainment

The abundance in the eighteenth century of long and multi-volume national historical narratives—histories of England, Scotland, and Great Britain, for example—sustains the presupposition of the genre's prestige among the reading public. Those "masterworks," as they were sold and advertised, attest to history's perception as a polite genre based on elegant composition. Notwithstanding, those texts shared bookshops', coffeehouses', and libraries' shelves with other narrative prose discourses and overlapping genres, not always understood as history but containing historically minded interpretations, arguments, and narratives. They prove that eighteenth-century "historical understanding structured and was structured by a historically dynamic literary system."[139] Aside from the novel, two other genres more closely interacted with history, reshaping it, and being reshaped by it: biography and the memoir. If in the seventeenth-century, treatises on the "art of history," such as Degory Wheare's *The Method and Order of Reading both Civil and Ecclesiastical Histories* (1685), suggested history was a genre for active, industrious, diligent readers, far beyond the reading of children and "ignorant" men, by the 1750s, seduction, imagination, sympathy, sentiment, and entertainment found their ways into the texts.

By the time Hume, Gibbon, and Robertson were writing their histories, history had found itself walking on a thin line. On the one hand, it could not exempt from being

[139] PHILLIIPS, Mark, *Society and Sentiment,* p. 10.

a literary genre that, based on truthfulness and impartiality, offered public lessons to its readers, on the other, it had to entertain them. Entertaining meant seducing, involving, and manipulating the language to allow what William Godwin, in his 1797 essays collected under the title of the *Enquirer*, called "rapt absorption"—a mode of reading that led to a deep sympathetic response to biographical, fictional, and historical narratives.[140] A statement by Hume in a notorious letter to his friend William Mure confirms that, by the mid-1750s, historians perceived the need to be trustworthy and impartial while still being interesting, entertaining, and sympathetic as their highest duty.[141] Adam Ferguson and Lord Kames thought the same. For Ferguson, for example, history—like poetry and other forms of prose—was meant to arouse sympathy, a sentiment that stands as the footing for our moral natures.[142] Kames' authoritative *Elements of Criticism* (1762) suggests how eighteenth-century historiography and historical criticism substantially modified the paradigm of historical distance.[143]

By theorizing the effect of an "ideal presence," the philosopher suggested that history—like the epic, drama, fables, and other artistic forms—carried readers to particular places and times, moving passions as well as touching sympathies and sentiments. Curiously, John Bennett is one of the writers who best summarized what a sentimental understanding of the historical past meant in the eighteenth century. Bennett's *Letters to a Young Lady on a Variety of Useful and Interesting Subjects. Calculated to Improve the Heart, to Form the Manners and Enlighten the Understanding* (1789) pointed to the fact that sentimental education benefited from the inclusion of national history readings.[144] For Bennett and other conduct writers, such

[140] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, pp. 106–107.
[141] HL 1:210.
[142] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment,* p. 108.
[143] KAMES, Henry Home, Lord. *Elements of Criticism* (v.1). Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005, pp. 325–368.
[144] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, p. 77.

as John Essex and Alexander Monro, from a typical eighteenth-century gender-biased perspective, women profited from more renewed historical approaches—conciliating experience, character, manners, and customs, whereas not neglecting politics, names, facts, epochs, and events.[145] In addition, Bennett was an enthusiast of Hume's, Robertson's, and other philosophical histories. Their texts were synthetic and sentimental, thus providing a new lens for readers to better educate themselves about human nature and the progress of civilization, manners, and the arts.

Hume himself also thought history was suitable for women. In his essay *Of the Study of History*, he pondered that there was "nothing which he would recommend more earnestly" to his female readers than reading history.[146] Considerably more instructive than books of amusement, history was also entertaining. Moreover, history taught important truths regarding the individual and society.[147] An amusing and erudite teacher of virtue, the historical genre illustrated the human affairs by transporting its readers to past it narrated and described.[148] It furthermore furnished other sciences with materials for their observations.[149] Whatever the sex of the reader, in Hume's conception, they benefited from consuming histories—even more if the historians telling the story were able to truly use their narrative to place his objects in between the general abstractions of philosophers and the ordinary observations of regular people.[150] In general, scholarship tacitly agrees that philosophical history is the Enlightenment's historical genre *per se*. Amply disseminated in the continent, philosophical histories were also prevalent in Britain. While France canonized Voltaire and Montesquieu as philosophical historians, in Britain, Hume, Robertson, Gibbon,

[145] HALSEY, Katie. The Home Education of Girls in the Eighteenth-Century Novel: "the Pernicious Effects of an Improper Education". In: *Oxford Review of Education*, v. 41, n. 4, pp. 432–433.
[146] E 563.
[147] E 563–564.
[148] E 564.
[149] E 567.
[150] E 568.

and Henry enjoyed similar prestige. Exploring areas far beyond the confines of humanist political narratives, philosophical histories allowed historical writing to expand its subjects, methods, and, more importantly, reading public. As it has just been suggested, an example is history's increased popularity among the female readerships.

In any event, if until around 1740 and 1750, most people did not see history reading as an activity suited for women, the mid-century print boom ensured a widespread distribution of books, and an increasing number of women challenged the social and moral restrictions imposed on them on what to read. For instance, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) fought against the gendering of reading, alleging that philosophical histories granted sound knowledge of politics and history.[151] Wollstonecraft, like Elizabeth Hamilton, outspoke in defense of ungendered degrees of rationality and the necessity of recognizing women as diligent history readers since, like men, they were also rational observers of reality. [152] From their standpoint, history reading was a vigorous mental exercise of rationality. Particularly Wollstonecraft, in her writings, aimed to be "philosophical", in the sense of detached, historical, and analytical, like the philosophical histories of the time.[153] She wanted to describe change in political, sociological, and cultural terms. As Gary Kelly suggests, the application of the elements of philosophical history to a critique of her present day situates her somewhere between Voltaire, Hume, and Robertson.[154]

Concerning Hamilton, she is an opportune case to analyze present-day perceptions of the relationships between history, biography, rationality, and entertainment. A prosperous novelist and historical biographer, Hamilton defended

[151] POOVEY, Mary. Mary Wollstonecraft: the Gender of Genres in Late Eighteenth-Century England. *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, v. 15, n. 2, 1982, p. 120.
[152] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment,* pp. 115–117.
[153] KELLY, Gary. *Revolutionary Feminism: the Mind and Career of Mary Wollstonecraft.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992, p. 153.
[154] KELLY, Gary. *Revolutionary Feminism, p. 153.*

that history's primary function was to stimulate reasoning, a capacity that could easily be developed through a careful and diligent reading of historical texts. By affirming that the novel's chief purpose was to arouse the imagination and oppose it to history, Hamilton went on to "feminize masculine discourses".[155] Her main intention seems to have been to make philosophy, theology, and especially history more popular and widespread. Also, from Hamilton's perspective, history's superiority was primarily due to its longer-lasting rhetorical force and the genre's genuine commitment to truthfulness.

Hamilton's opposite pole was William Godwin. He understood history as a compelling literary genre only when it promoted deep absorption in its readers—generating sympathetic responses from them. Godwin was critical of the increasingly popular philosophical history since it focused on collectivity and a bird's eye view of human nature. In Godwin's opinion, history lost its charm when it abdicated from details of inward description and the concreteness of individual lives and minds to refer to *long durée* political, social, and cultural processes. For him, the possibility of writing histories on biographical lines was the key to make the genre enjoyable.[156] Godwin defended a view of history that brought the romance and the novel very close to it, a kind of history that made use of "the language of visual portrait to make a connection between detailed textual characterization and the moral improvement of readers."[157] His ideal history was character-oriented, a repository of moral knowledge. Godwin knew the sort of history he idealized was highly speculative and did not understand such a fact as a disadvantage. For him, that fictious history, when pursued by a competent hand, was more dependable and more revealing of the science of man

[155] KELLY, Gary. *Women, Writing, and Revolution.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 265–268.
[156] McCRAY, J. Louise. Novel-Reading, Ethics, and William Godwin in the 1830s. *Studies in Romanticism*, v. 59, n. 2, 2020, pp. 209–230.
[157] McCRAY, J. Louise. Novel-Reading, Ethics, and William Godwin in the 1830s, p. 213.

than whatever a philosophical historian would ever write.[158] Godwin's essence of a real history, a fine product of his idealized historical imagination, resided in biographies, historical romances, and historical fiction. For the journalist, philosopher, and novelist, history oversaw the particulars, whereas the novel had the duty of generalizing from those particulars. In such a perspective, generalizations belonged to the realm of fiction. As Mark Phillips rightly evaluates, "Godwin recruits both Plutarchan biography and modern fiction into an alliance against the thin abstractions of Enlightenment historiography."[159]

In a similar way to history, biography had been a noble and traditional genre since its early ancient beginnings. From the Socratic times to the eighteenth century, western biography kept its popularity and esteem untouched. Literary genres that had customarily occupied contiguous but separate spaces, biography and history were brought closer together in the eighteenth century.[160] If, from Ancient Greece to the Christian acquisition of the form in late Antiquity, biographies primarily focused on the individual lives of politicians and poets, the 1700s reading public's growing interest in the social and society reshaped the genre. Eighteenth-century biographies moved towards the progressive incorporation of different spheres of human experience, pushing the boundaries separating public and private life, and incorporating a more intimate tone.[161] In other words, they overstepped the barriers segregating themselves and histories to become, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the instructive and exemplary study of domestic intimacy and common life.

Habitually, biographies and histories were recommended as literary genres teaching by examples but commonly suggested to distinct reading publics. The dignity,

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[158] McCRAY, J. Louise. Novel-Reading, Ethics, and William Godwin, p. 216.
[159] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, p. 119.
[160] LORIGA, Sabina. *O Pequeno X: Da Biografia à História*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2011, p. 19.
[161] LORIGA, Sabina. *O Pequeno X: Da Biografia à História*, p. 19.

seriousness, and concerns with public affairs, typical of histories, were customarily prescribed to the typical contemporary patriarchy—older men, especially those of higher-rank or involved in the public service. Oppositely, personal examples and domestic sketches—so emblematic of biographies—were understood as better suited to historically marginal reading groups, such as young men and women as well as middle-class readers from both sexes. By the mid-1700s, when those historically neglected groups became more targeted by authors and the book industry, history writers, their publishers, and printers felt the need to reshape some of the genre's fundamental assumptions and marketing strategies. Philosophical history was responsible for redrawing boundaries from history's side. For that reason, Hume's and Robertson's texts abound with passages designed to excite the sympathy and pity of readers from analyses of characters' lives, their enjoyments, traumas, and dilemmas. In a famous assessment of his own text, Hume affirmed he was the only impartial historian to lead his readers to "shed a generous tear for the fate of Charles."[162]

Finally, it should be emphasized that eighteenth-century philosophical history was deeply imbued with the Enlightenment's philosophical psychology. The present-day cravings for inwardness and the language of sympathy contributed to molding the manner several people experienced what they read. It is well-known that readers often respond to texts in ways far different from the original intentions of their authors. However, philosophical historians' sentimentalist and lively language fostered feelings of kindheartedness and sympathy towards historical characters and epochs in specific modes. For example, seventeenth-century historiography—much less consumed by urban masses—structured itself on a bigger historical distance, using representations solely to move readers' spontaneous desires for emulation and exemplarity. On the contrary, philosophical histories incorporated more than emulation and imitation, also bringing to the fore a provocative and entertaining evocation of previous happenings

[162] HE 1.*My Own Life*:XXX.

as well as individual and collective experiences. Philosophical histories universalized agents as subject to the ordinary situations of humankind. Passions, pleasures, disappointments, longings, dreams, and wishes moved historical agents' characters and influenced their actions. Eighteenth-century philosophical histories are a direct product of the 1700s sciences of man and their powerful reflections on the structure of the mind and human temper.

### 2.4. Partiality, Impartiality, and the Dignity of History

Connoting openness, unbiasedness, and coolness, claims for impartiality forcefully emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Overall, they were a response to the debates over method and empiricism in varied and diverse fields, such as historiography, politics, moral and natural philosophy, news publications, aesthetics, education, and religion, among others. In a milestone to the study of that *topos*, Kathryn Murphy and Anita Traninger argued that as it happened with the idea of objectivity, impartiality was also a disputed and multiform concept.[163] Besides, Murphy and Traninger importantly sustained that impartiality's essentiality as a discourse organizer had been neglected and assimilated as playing a supporting role in the discussions about objectivity for a long time. In evident dialog with Lorraine Daston's and Peter Galson's works, for Murphy and Traninger, talking about objectivity in a pre-Kantian moment sounds anachronistic and unfruitful. In general lines and proposing to trace a sort of pre-history of objectivity, they intended to show that for several seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Western European writers, from very different backgrounds, impartiality was a mandatory moral and epistemic starting point, a professed attitude that conditioned their approaches to their objects and their methods. In addition, for us, twenty-first century scholars, the study of impartiality

[163] MURPHY, Kathryn; TRANINGER, Anita. Introduction: Instances of Impartiality. In: MURPHY, K.; TRANINGER, A. (orgs.), *The Emergence of Impartiality*. Leiden: Brill, 2014, pp. 1-29.

offers a toolkit to evaluate how many kinds of writers signified and valued the notions and experiences they addressed in their discourses.

In an article published in 2018, Núria Soriano Muñoz emphasized the fact that impartiality was a fundamental notion of historical and political discourse in the age of the European Enlightenments.[164] According to her, the term was a vital element of the age's historical lexicon and intrinsically connected to what we understand today as an eighteenth-century enlightened approach to historical writing.[165] Arguing in favor of the need to turn special the attention to eighteenth-century appropriations and uses of the idea, she defended that the concept is easily identifiable in numerous texts produced by historians, politicians, journalists, and pamphleteers from 1700s, reinforcing that the understanding of what was an impartial text or judgment varied dramatically in contemporary intense ideological disputes and heated public debates. Although Muñoz's reflections lean primarily on the Iberic cases, her research in eighteenth-century dictionaries and multiple vernaculars pointed to a wide circulation of the word in France and Great Britain, both in canonical and non-canonical texts. For instance, aside from books and treatises, in England, the term impartial increasingly circulated in political pamphlets and poems printed in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and in the early years of the century before.[166] The period of the Exclusion crisis (1678–1681) and the emergency of the Whig Party were decisive for the steady growth of the use of the word in Britain's contemporary political vocabulary. Attempting to legitimate their ideas before citizens, Whig writers and politicians tried to convince society that their interpretations of factual reality and historical events were based

[164] SORIANO MUÑOZ, Nuria. Detrás de las palabras: usos políticos del concepto de imparcialidad e su función en la construcción de la América en la Ilustración Española. *História da Historiografia: International Journal of Theory and History of Historiography*, v. 11, n. 27, 2018, pp. 202–225.
[165] SORIANO MUÑOZ, Núria. Detrás de las palabras, p. 203.
[166] GERRARD, Christine. The Language of Impartiality and Party-Political Discourse in England, 1680–1745. In: MURPHY, Kathryn, and TRANINGER, Anita. *The Emergency of Impartiality*. Leiden: Brill, 2014, p. 214.

upon a sort of objectivity and reasonableness. Muñoz in addition reinforced that the francophone and anglophone multiple uses of the idea led to a considerable prestige of the notion when incorporated by several writers in the Iberian Peninsula.[167]

Adam Smith and David Hume are two examples of canonical and prestigious *literati* who claimed most of their theorizations and reflections about individuals and their culture, economy, politics, and society were impartial. Both conceived impartial engagement with the subjects they approached as a tool to avoid selfishness and indifference towards external objects of inquiry.[168] For them, humans do not naturally distribute their attention towards external entities equally. In opposition, they tend to favor acquainted elements and those near in time or space, people included. In the Humean and Smithian philosophical systems, partiality stood as an affection that conditioned the way humans saw and examined the real world around them, customarily favoring nearness, often standing as an insurmountable obstacle to broader and more distant points of view. In that manner, for both Hume and Smith, if observers want to avoid biases and unfairness, they must watchfully tame their own partialities, a natural tendency of human nature. The strategy is to correct partiality through the rational incorporation of wider and more encompassing perspectives, opening doors to sympathetic engagement with foreign standpoints aside from their individual ones. From that point of view, impartiality comes to be a consciously, intentionally, and insistently developed affection, the best antidote to partial indifference. In short, impartiality is the affection that allows for sympathetic and emotional response to others, especially those distant from us.[169] Moreover, since partiality hinders good judgment, for Hume and Smith, the path towards impartiality is

[167] SORIANO MUÑOZ, Núria. Detrás de las palabras, p. 203.
[168] THN 3.2.2.8. SMITH, Adam. *A Theory of Moral Sentiments.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 255–256. The selected passages are in Book 6, Chapter II, Paragraphs 1 to 3 (TMS 6.II.1–3).
[169] MÜLLER, Leonardo A. P. *A Filosofia de Adam Smith: Imaginação e Especulação*. Doctoral Thesis. São Paulo: University of São Paulo, 2016, pp. 88–89.

one of the most fundamental epistemic foundations of the ideal method of judging and assessing certain entities, including past events and their evidences, sources, agents, and spectators.

It has long been argued that mobilizations of the rhetoric of impartiality became ever more common in Stuart England, especially in works that aimed to assess the impacts of the key events commonly characterizing the period, remarkably the political ones (i.e., the Glorious Revolution) in Britain's political discourses and nearby kinds of writings, such as history texts. The last decades of the Stuart period, mainly from 1680 onwards, had been regularly interpreted by present-day historiography as a time of party division and political factionalism. As Hume suggested to Smith in a 1752 letter, a history of England that did not problematize the dynamics and origins of party and factional struggle between *Whiggism* and *Toryism* during and immediately after the Stuart period immediately lacked depth and excellence.[170] For Hume, his historical work was an example of a bold and successful attempt of rising above faction, avoiding party spirit, zealotry, and radicalism.[171] He perceived his text as a fine example of moderation.

Even though Chapters Three and Four will develop this argument in further detail, for the moment, it is crucial to remember that, for Hume, impartially standing above party meant more than exercising unbiasedness judgment. It was the *sine qua non* condition to write more than a "compiling" history, a kind of historical practice, Hume, from a certain point of his career as a historian onwards, pejoratively evaluated his once esteemed Paul de Rapin-Thoyras had advanced in his muti-volume *Histoire d'Anglaterre* (1724–1727). From Hume's standpoint, only impartial historians could manage to write polite history to the highest philosophical standards and impartiality

[170] HL 1:168.
[171] HE 1.*My Own Life*: XXVII–XXXIV.

was the most necessary prerequisite for developing the kind of narrative voice he guessed he had achieved throughout the process of writing his *History of England*.

The *History,* Hume believed, did not embrace any parties and represented what Pierre Bayle considered the ideal historical text—one that annoys all sects and factions, one that adulates neither one nor the other, a writing that portrays an author's honest opinion about all sides.[172] A creator of a new kind of critical and generalized philosophy, and a skeptical Hume deeply admired—as we shall see in Chapter Five—Bayle always contended that "history, society, science, politics, and above all morality are to be explained only in rational, precise terms."[173] Thus, it is not a mistake to say that by the mid-1700s partiality was widely understood as a vice that blinded several intellectuals, especially historians, preventing them to see what existed under the mythological dimensions the past. Many eighteenth-century history writers perceived history as a genre prone to fancy and the marvelous, especially when historical writing produced descriptions and frames of individuals, notably past heroes' lives and accomplishments, without a proper critical spirit. In such a context, the attitude and language of impartiality were the arrangements of a rational and objective solution to such a tendency, allowing for a pursuit of the general, collective, and social interest, as well as the common good. Impartiality both as an attitude and a rhetorical strategy characterized a predisposition towards better and proper understanding public life and human matters.

Curiously, Rainer Godel tells us that the 1700s testified the dynamization of media and its genres, with controversial topics and discussions reaching beyond the confines of the academy and its treatises. By the 1720s, controversy had reached

[172] SKJÖNSBERG, Max. *The Persistence of Party*, p. 175.
[173] ISRAEL, Jonathan. Pierre Bayle's Correspondence and its Significance for the History of Ideas. In: *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, v. 80, n. 3, 2019, pp 486–487.

newsbooks, journals, and pamphlets, for example.[174] In that case, the eighteenth-century urban masses took part in debates they would not have had the chance in the century before. In the 1700s, the urban masses in Britain, France, and Germany were finally incorporated into the debates. Therefore, readers emerged as an active part of the process of social cognition, the impartial judges who were daily requested to opine on a broad number of issues that became more and more intertwined in the public sphere and its extra-academic discussions. According to Ursula Goldenbaum, the Enlightenments—mainly the British and German variants—developed their authentic matters of public interest earlier than in other parts of Europe and many of those issues, chiefly politics and history, became increasingly more relevant to the general public for an extended period of time.[175] The belief Goldenbaum and Godel share is that by the 1750s polemical exchange had already taken over the public arena, with controversial political debates ceasing to be exclusively academic-structured, "bound to each participant's quest for truth and to each participant's reference for jointly solving a problem through rational means."[176] At the time, readers of newsbooks, newspapers, and books decisively became essential to the debate, they were the ones "entitled to decide impartiality on the facts the contenders had presented."[177]

In Hume's writings, whenever impartiality is recruited more explicitly, it seems to refer to an immense effort to remember Britain's recent historical past with less certainty of what is right and wrong, a sentiment the author considered a motor of factionalism, zealotry, and bigotry. In a society so divided and facing a memorial dispute that tended to favor Whiggism, Hume, who saw often saw himself as skeptical

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[174] GODEL, Rainer. The Rise of Controversies and the Function of Impartiality in the Early Eighteenth Century. In: MURPHY, Kathryn, TRANINGER, Anita. The Emergency of Impartiality. Leiden: Brill, 2014, pp. 247–248.
[175] GOLDENBAUM, Ursula. Die Öffentliche Debatte in der Deutschen Aufklärung (1687–1796). Einleitung. In: GOLDENBAUM, Ursula. *Appell an das Publikum:* Die Öffentliche Debatte in der Deutschen Aufklärung (1687–1796). Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004, pp. 4–5.
[176] GODEL, Rainer. *The Rise of Controversies and the Function of Impartiality*, p. 249.
[177] GODEL, Rainer. *The Rise of Controversies and the Function of Impartiality*, p. 249.

or, as Duncan Forbes suggested, a scientific Whig.[178] He therefore argued to be writing to both parties, to the two sexes, in an exercise of sympathy and affection to all sides and audiences. In general, in early modern England, discussions about impartiality became more visible in the political sphere in the aftermath of the English Civil War and subsequent death of King Charles I in 1649. As Nathaniel Stogdill remembers us, the controversies of the Civil War continued even more intensely after the king's death, when the two opposing parties competed to impartially account for the belligerent and quarrelsome events of the 1640s.[179] It should be remarked that those reports of recent past events were commonly found in the periodical newsbooks which rapidly proliferated after their first appearance at the end of 1641.

Product of a new and potentially lucrative market, newsbooks were the modern precursors of newspapers and usually narrated the main political events that happened between each of their periodical editions. Quickly printed and cheaper than books, they speedily became the main vehicle for the mid-1650s political factions to spread their views on recent events and dispute narratives about them. As remembered by Joad Raymond, political antagonism was a distinctive feature of English newsbooks, and they became influential on the increasingly sensitive to rhetorical and political arguments eighteenth-century enlarged readership.[180] This way, the second half of the seventeenth century saw England's print culture abound with those periodicals that claimed to reject the loyalties and language of political interests. Newsbooks also argued to offer a deeply polarized reading public honest

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[178] CONIFF, James. Hume on Political Parties: The Case for Hume as Whig. In: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, v. 12, n.2, 1978–1979, pp. 153–156. SKJÖNSBERG, Max, *The Persistence of Party,* pp. 151–152. FORBES, Duncan. *Hume's Philosophical Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 125–192.

[179] STOGDILL, Nathaniel. Out of the Books and Out of Themselves: Invigorating Impartiality in Early Modern England. MURPHY, Kathryn, and TRANINGER, Anita. *The Emergency of Impartiality*. Leiden: Brill, 2014, p. 189.

[180] RAYMOND, JOAD. *The Invention of the Newspaper*: English Newsbooks 1641–1649. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 27.

and non-partisan view of their contemporality. As Stogdill observes, *A Book Without a Title, The Impartiall* Intelligencer, and *Mercurius Impartialitis* are examples of newsbooks that claimed to be disinterested in a period interest-driven political discourses overflowed in England's society.[181]

Moreover, the rhetoric of impartiality remained alive and influential in Britain in the ongoing decades. In fact, the terms 'impartiality' and 'impartial' played an important role in the party-political discourse in the transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. The years between 1680 and 1740 saw the hasty surging of political parties in the country, following the ideological polarization of the Civil War and the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. As Christine Gerrard shows us, the labels *Tory* and *Whig* derived from insults one group directed at the other and the term 'party' itself had a negative connotation at the time.[182] One of the parties' and their supporters' strategy to legitimate themselves as impartial was to convince others that they were not 'political parties', but groups representing the common interests of the nation. In that sense, the history of the parties' opposing efforts to appropriate notions of 'public spirit' and 'national interest' importantly overlap with that of early modern impartiality and historiography. It was common for party leaders and writers at the time to seek to conceal their partisanship—or partiality—through the cultivation of historiographical impartiality, an unbiased critical view of the evidence historians use as raw material for their reflections. Gerrard interestingly notices that the formal recognition of the legitimacy of the opposition in England dates from 1826, which meant that in the century before the political ideology and rhetoric generated by both the government and particularly the opposition centered on understandings of the past and the present under a "imagined ideal of political wholeness or non-partisanship".[183]

[181] STOGDILL, Nathaniel. Out of the Books and Out of Themselves, p. 190.
[182] GERRARD, Christine. The Language of Impartiality, p. 212.
[183] GERRARD, Christine. The Language of Impartiality, p. 212.

Even though Gerrard's immediate example is Lord Bolingbroke's *A Dissertation on Parties* (1735), we can easily say that David Hume and Rapin de Thoyras, for example, fantasized on a similar archetype.[184] When Hume was writing his *History of England*, he assumed to be adhering to the imagined ideal of history as an impartial and dignified literature of social description. In an exchange of letters in the 1750s, he affirmed:

> The more I advance in my undertaking, the more I am convinced that the History of England has never yet been written, not only for style, which is notorious to all the world, but also for matter; such is the ignorance and partiality of all our historians. Rapin, whom I had esteem for, is totally despicable. I may be liable to the reproach of ignorance, but I am certain of escaping that of partiality. The truth is, there is so much reason to blame and praise alternatively King and Parliament, that I am afraid the mixture of both in my composition, being so equal, may pass sometimes for an affectation, and not the result of judgement and evidence[185].

In addition, it is important to remember that the emergency of history as an academic discipline in the nineteenth century reorganized some previous notions regarding the study and accounts of past happenings. Some scholars have often argued that in the century before, historical events were mainly a "factual" substrate for moral philosophy, political science, or political economy, whereas, in the 1800s, historical events increasingly became studied as historical phenomena in their essence. Such a claim presupposes that consistent theories and philosophies of history were only possible after the nineteenth-century understanding of history as a science and the field's consequential specialization and departmentalization in European universities. However, this perception is only partially accurate.

The historicist impulse undoubtedly systematized and advanced specific discussions about historical methods and practice. Nonetheless, the roots of many of

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[184] FRANCHINA, Miriam. *Paul Rapin Thoyras and the Art of Eighteenth-Century Historiography*, see Chapter 3, pp. 111–176.
[185] TODD, William B. Foreword, p. XIII.

those conversations were much older.[186] Philosophies of history, or at least a series of discussions that resembled them, surely existed in the centuries before the nineteenth—especially in the 1700s. They were not usually assembled in a single piece or volume claiming to be doing meta-reflections on historical knowledge or historiography but dispersed in histories and other kinds of writings, such as treatises, essays, novels, and lectures. In any manner, when put together, the pulverized reflections on historical activity by historically minded writers such as Machiavelli, Locke, Bayle, Voltaire, and Hume, to mention just a few, consist of individual theories of historical knowledge. They were considerations about the role and duty of historians, usually in tense dialog with other conceptions contemporary and prior to theirs.

It is vital to bear in mind that eighteenth-century histories circulated in the lack of coordinated academic history departments, even though some rhetoric and moral philosophy professors, like Adam Smith, offered lectures on history and historical writing. This way, the universities were not the leading producers of historical learning and theoretical reflections on historical practice. In such a context, the genre's authority was a historical construct that lay both in the cultural and stereotyped understanding of it as a dignified form of literature and the social reputation of its writers, usually men from the highest ranks of society. A presupposition of the idea of the dignity of history was easily detectable in the aforementioned—and widely distributed at the time—*Lettres on Rhetoric and Belles Letters*, from Hugh Blair and Adam Smith. The former, despite being a less original rhetorician than the latter, became quite influential among the public opinion, as well as with aspiring and well-established historians. Occupant of the Chair of Rhetoric at the University of Edinburgh when Hume was composing his *History,* Blair, a great admirer of the Greek, Roman,

[186] ASSIS, Arthur Aflaix. Por que se Escrevia História? Sobre a Justificação da Historiografia no Mundo Ocidental Pré-Moderno. In: SALOMON, Marlon (ed.). *História, Verdade e Tempo.* Chapecó: Argos, 2011, pp. 121–125.

and early modern Florentine histories, affirmed in his lecture XXXV, *Comparative Merit of the Ancients and the Moderns—Historical Writing*:

> Let us guard, however, against a blind and implicit veneration for the ancients in everything. I have opened the general principle, which must go far in instituting a fair composition between them and the moderns. Whatever superiority the ancients may have had in point of genius, yet in all arts, where the natural progress of knowledge has had room to produce any considerable effects, the moderns cannot but have some advantage. (…) Hence, in natural philosophy, astronomy, chemistry, and other sciences that depend on an extensive knowledge and observation of facts, modern philosophers have an unquestionable superiority over the ancient.[187]

For Blair, there were subjects not usually linked to the arts and poetry, but related to natural science, in which the moderns had certain advantages over the ancient. History shared in great part such an advantage. Still in his *Lectures*, the rhetorician underlined: "in history, there is certainly more political knowledge in several European nations at present, than there was in ancient Greece and Rome. We are better acquainted with the nature of government because we have seen it under a greater variety of forms and revolutions. The world is more laid open than it was in former times"[188]. However, history was not only science and perception of structures, actions, and effects; it was also an art and an enthusiastic engagement of genius.

Hugh Blair's lectures exerted enormous influence over David Hume's and other historians' compositions. When Hume was openly looking for establishing himself as a widely recognized national historian, Blair served not only as a guideline but also as a personal mentor, a person Hume looked for in search of advice and with whom he discussed key methodological and ethical issues. That can be seen in an intense exchange of letters in the early 1760's, when part of the *History* had already been

[187] BLAIR, Hugh. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Ed. Linda Ferreira-Buckley and S. Michael Halloran. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005, p. 395.

[188] BLAIR, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, pp. 391–395..

published and some of the latest volumes were yet to be released. Very representative of their interactions and intercourse is the discussion between the two about the authenticity of James Macpherson's polemic, and recently printed, translation of the Ossian Poems.[189] The conversation is revealing not only of their respectful relationship, but also of some central aspects of Hume's historical method, which will be commented in Chapter Four.

History's nobility also derived from its intimate relationship with classical and humanist didacticism, its old-age and intrinsic aesthetic-pedagogical function, and the reinforcement of its rhetorical model throughout centuries.[190] At the late seventeenth century and the early beginnings of the 1700s, history was still one of the most prominent vehicles of instruction of contemporary readers on how to become more prudent or relatively better. At that time, history writers also tended to assume a constancy of human nature and very little degrees of social change, which reaffirmed the utility of past examples.[191] As decades went by, the mid-eighteenth century saw the beginnings of a partial dissolution of the old *historia magistra vitae* topos, as well as a dynamization of historical time and the concept of history itself.[192] Nevertheless, even though overgeneralizing perspectives tend to hide the diversity of historical explanations far beyond the confines of examples of practical actions that mid-eighteenth-century texts abridged, the persistence of varied degrees of the exemplary justification for historiography at the time is notable.[193] Many texts, like David Hume's *History of England*, articulated a more diverse range of historical explanations, didacticism, and examples from the past, reaffirming the classical objective of teaching

[189] HL 1.10:398–401.
[190] GRAFTON, Anthony. What Was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 29–30, 72.
[191] KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 27.
[192] KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, pp. 165–169.
[193] KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Futures Past,* p. 28.

contemporary and future readers powerful lessons which could enable societies to prevent misbehaviors and the recurrence of certain mistakes in the future. For writers like Hume, history still retained a diagnostic and predictive meaning serving as an instrument to capacitate an enlarged eighteenth-century readership as moral judges of the past at a time of uncertainty about the future, particularly regarding politics.[194]

In George Nadel's *Philosophy of History before Historicism*, the author suggested that several ancient Greek historians were responsible for the earliest diffusion of the didactic character of historiography: offering moral instruction and training for public duty.[195] That message was perpetuated by many, especially Polybius, who enjoyed an excellent reputation not only in his present time but also in many centuries to come. For example, Polybius' *Histories* translation into Latin—made by Isaac Casaubon in 1605— was accompanied by a preface stressing the value of history for education and politics.[196] Primarily read by rulers, politicians, generals, and their closer circles, Polybius' lessons matched those of the most dependable of all classical authors to posterity, Cicero. Their propositions, particularly the idea that history's portrayal of others' experiences was philosophy teaching by examples, survived remarkably well until the eighteenth century.

[194] KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1998, pp. 169–171.
[195] NADEL, George H. Philosophy of History before Historicism. *History and Theory*, v. 3, n. 3, 1964, p. 295.
[196] NADEL, George H. Philosophy of History before Historicism, p. 295.

# CHAPTER THREE

## FROM *THE HISTORY OF GREAT BRITAIN* TO *THE HISTORY OF ENGLAND*

As previously stated, David Hume's *History of England* was his principal historical work and most famous text for many decades after its first publication.[197] The book's first two volumes were published under the title of *The History of Great Britain,* in 1754 and 1756, respectively, while the other four volumes were printed between 1761 and 1762 and entitled *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*. This was also the title of all posterior multi-volume editions. Hume's *History* is a sophisticated account of events and structures, replete with invented speeches, minute biographies, and character portraits, designed to instruct and entertain its readers. The *History* was written in a mid-century polite style, attempting to avoid too much controversy and polemics. However, it aroused the anger of many, especially clergymen and other people linked to the Church of Scotland. An example was Reverend John Bonar of Cockpen, a minister of *The Kirk*, who, like many others, wrote a widely circulated pamphlet fiercely criticizing Hume.[198]

The *History of England* underwent more than 2,000 revisions in the short interval of fifteen years, between 1763, when the first octavo edition was published as a set, and 1778, when the first edition with the author's last corrections and improvements was published—two years after his death in 1776. The absolute majority of those revisions were personally conducted or approved by Hume, who Frederic Van Holthoon describes as an "insatiable" revisionist of his own work.[199] Obsessed with corrections and improvements, Hume saw his text jump from six to

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[197] SCHMIDT, Claudia M. *David Hume: Reason in History.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, p. 393.

[198] AHNERT, Thomas. *The Moral Culture of the Scottish Enlightenment, 1690–1805.* New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014, pp. 97–98.

[199] HOLTHOON, F. L. van. Hume and 1763 Edition of his *History of England:* His Frame of Mind as a Revisionist. *Hume Studies*, v. 23, n. 1, 1997, p. 137.

eight volumes to then go back to six volumes again. He also witnessed its printing in quartos, octavos, and duodecimos. Even more astonishing is the fact that, throughout his arduous revisionary labor, he got to the point of making 182 meaningful adaptations in a single chapter, chapter forty-five, in ten years.[200] Those alterations mainly consisted of important and large-scale excisions, significant additions in the light of new and fresh evidence, corrections of fact, and accommodations to adapt the text to contemporary criticism.[201] As a matter of fact, Hume was very responsive to compliments and, particularly, criticisms. He was also frantically worried about his reputation as truthful historian, so much so that, in 1773, after a vast number of revisions, he impatiently admitted to his printer and friend, William Strahan: "This is the last time I shall probably take the plans of correcting that work, which is now brought to a great degree of accuracy (…) and is probably much more laborur'd than any other production in our Language."[202]

Finally, in its final format, with the author's last corrections and improvements, *The History of England* was generally sold in six-volumes, containing seventy-one chapters, four appendices, a large number of endnotes, and several footnotes. It possesses an enormous scale, making it a text that cannot be read in a couple of sittings. In its author's conception, the *History* was a teacher of moral virtue—an accurate, impartial, and interesting account of the facts he understood as central to comprehending the historical process leading to the tortuous progress of civilization in England. Intended to distinguish itself from epic poetry, a genre entirely directed at arousing the passions, and moral philosophy, an often subtle and highly speculative genre that Hume much appreciated, his monumental historical narrative overflows with history's typical examples and lively illustrations, which the author conceived as more

[200] HOLTHOON, F. L. van. Hume and 1763 Edition of his *History of England*, p. 137.
[201] HOLTHOON, F. L. van. Hume and 1763 Edition of his *History of England*, p. 138.
[202] HL 2:239.

efficient teachers than the affections of poems, or the abstract philosophical conventions with which he had already experimented.[203]

While writing his *History of England,* Hume increasingly observed that history, different from historically oriented studies of politics, economy, or moral philosophy, was a form of knowledge with unique problems and in demand of particular methods. As we shall see below, Hume wrote his *History* backward, with the first two volumes comprising a recent history of Great Britain in the seventeenth century. In any way, as the volumes flowed on and Hume retroceded toward a more distant past in his search for the tone of his all-encompassing history of England, he experimented with the incorporation of new themes, made concessions and accommodations in his style, and changed his original narrative structure. In that manner, Hume became a historian while writing the *History* since he had no exact idea of how to pursue so huge an enterprise. In short, he twisted many of his early theories about history and historical knowledge, as will be described in Chapter Five, to fit the mold of his ongoing historical work. As Leo Braudy asserted, Hume progressively became "disenchanted with some of the structural techniques imported either from past historiographical practice or from his own [previous] philosophical precepts."[204] Braudy and others also believe that Hume himself had grand personal ambitions for his project. As Chapter Four will argue, Hume's objective with the *History* was derived from his desire to discourage political enthusiasm and factionalism, features clearly visible in the present-day party conflict in England and Scotland. In that manner, Hume's tone of "lofty impartiality"[205] in the *History* was designed to help undermine the threatening idealism inspired by the "Whig worship of the 'ancient Constitution' as well as the 'divine right' theories

[203] HICKS, Philip. *Neoclassical History and English Culture*, p. 9.
[204] BRAUDY, Leo. *Narrative Form in History and Fiction: Hume, Fielding and Gibbon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970, pp. 33–34.
[205] HICKS, Philip. *Neoclassical History and English Culture*, p. 9.

associated with the Tories."[206] In this regard, Hume's *History* stood halfway through the distance of philosophy and the closeness of everyday life.[207]

By and large, the main objective of this chapter is to link the first moment of the thesis, which offered an overview of the convergence between philosophical and historical writing in Hume's texts (Chapter One) as well as a panorama of historical writing in Britain in the eighteenth century (Chapter Two), to the second half of the argumentation, which will dig deeper into Hume's historiographical practice in the *History of England* (Chapter Four) and his early theorizations of a historical method prior to the *History of England* (Chapter Five). This chapter is divided into two sections. Section 3.1 will offer an early introduction to the *History of England* from a genre-biased perspective, locating the *History* into the larger context of philosophical history, widely considered the historical genre *per se* of the French and British Enlightenments. It will also reflect on the eighteenth-century *ethos* of politeness in Britain, considering how it affected particular aspects of history texts at the time, Hume's *History* included.

Differently, section 3.2 proposes an overview of the *History*'s gestation and the publication of its two first volumes under the title of *The History of Great Britain.* Based on the three standard biographies of Hume, particularly James Harris' more recent intellectual biography, the main objective of the section is to describe the factors that propelled Hume into definitely engaging *The History of Great Britain*'s project. Section 3.2 also considers the context leading to the transformation of Hume's *History of Great Britain* into a *History of England*. At the end, I expect this chapter to allow for better assimilation of the arguments contained in Chapters Four and Five, which I suppose

[206] BAVERSTOCK, James Andrew George. *A Chief Standard Work: The Rise and Fall of David Hume's History of England (1754–c. 1900).* Doctoral Thesis. London: University of London, 1997, pp. 7–8. SKJÖNSBERG, Max. *The Persistence of Party*, pp. 152–154.
[207] HARRIS, James. *Hume: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 324.

will be more effectively comprehended if additional knowledge on *The History of England*'s early conception as *The History of Great Britiain* is acquired.

## 3.1. Politeness and Philosophical History

It is evident that not all literary genres are born equal, and the same can be said about their popularity and prestige in society. It also is conceivable that in Britain, and other parts of Western Europe, especially in the second half of the 1700s, readers had high expectations of history—much more than from the novel, for instance. Besides being considered an eminently popular and digestible writing style with reputed superiority, historical writing was often identified as a vantage point from which to observe the human nature and behaviors as well as an antidote against excessive passion and partiality.[208] Moreover, the methodic art of narrating the past was not seen as mere opinion or fiction—it had a commitment to truth, and customarily distinguished itself from other forms of narrative writing within the mid-eighteenth-century wider and more comprehensive literary system.[209] Figuring among the readership and the market as a sacralized vehicle of truth and the noblest genre of prose writing, history was grand and, in some sense, "served as a kind of counter-genre helping to define a cluster of related kinds of literature."[210] A significant part of the 1700s British readers, from all ages, both genders, and pertaining diverse social and intellectual backgrounds saw historians as belonging to a well-informed *intelligentsia*, deciding the causes of events and conjectures, rather than just describing their occurrences. The perception that the authority of historians could persuade and flip opinions was widely diffused as, on the whole, they were respected and admired writers.

Among the expected functions and uses of histories in the mid-eighteenth century was the idea that it instructed society on making judgments and assessments

[208] LEVINE, Joseph. *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, pp. 274–275.
[209] LEVINE, Joseph. *The Battle of the Books,* pp. 269–270.
[210] PHILLIPS, Mark Salber. *Society and Sentiment*, p.8.

under an impartial eye and with a polite, refined, and virtuous set of manners.[211] Knowledge about the past, especially when associated to a domain of the arts of rhetoric, legitimated impressions and ideas, especially in politics.[212] As many perceived, among the several benefits history had brought to English society, even before the eighteenth century, was its usefulness to eloquence and persuasiveness in discussions and debates regarding public affairs.[213] John Pocock tells us that throughout what he refers to as "the first great age of English scholarship" (c. 1650–c.1700), "to write history was to write polemics."[214] At that time, since England was a legal and not a geographical term, writing English history was interpreting England's law, or "the relation of that law to the Crown and so to take sides in the battle of the parties."[215] In that manner, since the past contained examples and authoritative precedents, its study was vital to furnish both Whigs and Tories with arguments for their heated disputes in the political and public arenas.

Regarding the relationship between history and polemics, by the mid-eighteenth century, something changed. History still referred to sensitive subjects; nevertheless, the philosophical history from the 1740s and 1750s, with its formidable scale, was not supposed to be excessively polemical. In that sense, historical writing recurred to more subtle rhetorical tools such as speeches, character sketches, and maxims of reflection to enhance its moderate persuasive power. Also, from the 1740s on, history managed to reach beyond the confines of the political elites—those who

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[211] J.G.A. Pocock affirms that especially refinement and politeness were crucial notions in the ideology of the eighteenth-century commercial society in Britain. Histories were one of the vehicles for such an ideology to spread out. See POCOCK, J.G.A. *Virtue, Commerce, and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 115–131. For a good consideration on the "philosophers of politeness", see p. 280.

[212] PELTONEN, Markku. *Rhetoric, Politics, and Popularity in Pre-revolutionary England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 56–58.

[213] PELTONEN, Markku. *Rhetoric, Politics, and Popularity in Pre-revolutionary England*, pp. 82–83, 109.

[214] POCOCK, J.G.A. Robert Brady, 1627–1700. A Cambridge Historian for the Restoration. *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, v. 10, n. 2, 1951, p. 189.

[215] POCOCK, J.G.A. Robert Brady, 1627–1700, p. 189.

had duties in the public service or princely audiences. That enlargement of the audience's scope pressured history texts to begin to relocate certain classical commonplaces of the genre by the fourth decade of the century. If before Hume's, Robertson's, and Gibbon's appearances in the editorial market, the dominant perception had been that of history as intended for the education of political leaders, after their ample diffusion and commercialization that viewpoint shifted. History quickly became understood as suited for both the elites and the middle classes, recommended to men and women. Differently from widely recognized Augustan history writers, such as the Earl of Clarendon and Gilbert Burnet, who targeted mainly contemporary princely and other sorts of political audiences, Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon—together with their publishers—targeted a significantly broader reading public.[216]

Hume's *History of England* is a narrative that earned the reputation of a literary rarity. Being an author with enormous erudition and strong ties to classical texts, Hume guessed a sort of neo-classicism was the solution to contour the constatation, as mentioned earlier, of weakness in English historiography. Even though most studies on Hume's thinking have insisted on focusing on his leading role in dramatically improving modern philosophy, an analysis of his historical work benefits from acknowledging his revisiting of classicism as an inspiration for his texts.[217] In that manner, his *History of England* observed several ancient protocols for historical writing, being based on truisms and rhetorical procedures previously operated in many other ancient texts. An example is the age-old and widely used rhetorical maneuver of putting words into the mouths of his protagonists to dramatize and clarify issues. Hume found this device extremely useful, and even though neoclassicists disagreed about

[216] OKIE, Laird. *Augustan Historical Writing: Histories of England in the English Enlightenment.* Lanham and London University Press of America, 1991, pp. 17–25.
[217] BAUMSTARK, Moritz. Hume's Readings of the Classics at Ninewells, pp. 63–65.

such a procedure, Hume repeatedly pieced together arguments and attributed them to historical agents.[218]

Although it might astonish us that this classical strategy survived at least until the third quarter of the eighteenth century, it should not be forgotten that Hume adapted the procedure to his needs. He did not use to attribute speeches only to specific individuals, but also—and very commonly—to parties, making the speeches function primarily as rhetorical exercises of reflection about the pros and cons of a policy or model of government.[219] He intended to avoid heated reactions, especially from party adepts or fellow historians. For Hume, every reader had the capacity for moral feelings or sentiments which were supposed to be awakened or strengthened by the historian's narrative. Hume's descriptions and examples were conceived to excite or enliven "the reader to feel some new impression of a passion."[220] Therefore, Hume moderate and polite arousal of sentiment rejected long, direct quotations of impassioned figures, replacing them with brief, polite, reasoned discourses.

Hume's philosophical *History of England* was revolutionary in many aspects, especially in the treatment it gave many religious and, mainly, constitutional issues. In order to achieve that, once again, the author took advantage of his familiarity with classical rhetoric and its perceived ability to persuade, manipulating its tools whenever needed. Hume's *History* "represents a profound encounter between the modern world and this ancient literary genre, demonstrating both the versatility and durability of

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[218] HERMAN, Arthur. *How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe's Poorest Nation Created our World and Everything in it*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001, p.23.

[219] As I see, the best example of such a procedure lies in the *History of Great Britain*, when Hume describes the disagreements between James I and the Commons some years before his death. The background in which the speeches and debates took place is prepared a few pages before the insertion of the first speech (HGB 176–180). Then, after a short speech is attributed to the king (HGB 180), a long debate between the two parties is emulated (HGB 182–184).

[220] WERTZ, Spencer K. *Between Hume's Philosophy and History: Historical Theory and Practice*. Lanham: University Press of America, 2000, pp. 71–72.

neoclassicism." [221] Furthermore, Hume wrote at an age when the language of politeness was in progress. It was a conjecture of change in the intellectual circles of Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, and other British cities with an enlarged readership, bustling academic life, and overflowing with associations, membership clubs and societies.[222] As put by many, by the 1750s, the British and Scottish intellectual and cultural establishment tended to refuse the dominance of clericalist histories leaning towards a secularized, polite, and moderate approach to the past, one that aroused the cultivation of the idea of progress and improvement in history.[223] Especially among the modern Scots, polite scholarship was perceived as more valuable and instructive than essentially clericalist historical studies or considerations with excessively religious overtones.

"Polite" texts were then understood as pieces that encouraged citizens to furnish their arguments in conversations with worthy subjects such as poetry, history, and philosophy, as well as stimulate polished debates and an "amicable collision" of ideas.[224] The perspective was especially applicable and proper to the education of the modern citizens since it helped them obtain political knowledge and achieve social refinement. Politeness taught them how to talk, debate, and behave in public environments by polishing their manners, affirming itself as a tool to fertilize aesthetic capacities and the possibility of better intervening in the debates and discussions of public life. One of Hume's self-declared objectives when writing *The History of England* was to use it to arouse moderation and politeness at a time of heated politico-religious

[221] HICKS, Philip. *Neoclassical History and English Culture*, p. 171.
[222] As Frank O'Gorman reminds us, between 1750 and 1800, the Scottish economy grew at an accelerating rate and a new country seemed to emerge. Such a fact resonated in present-day perceptions of Scottish national identity. The Scottish Enlightenment of the second half of the eighteenth century was responsible for reinforcing this ideal of a cosmopolitan, highly cultured, and polite Scotland. The Scottish Enlightenment cultivated politeness. See O'GORMAN, Frank. *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688–1832*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, pp. 325–326.
[223] HERMAN, Arthur. *How the Scots Invented the Modern World*, pp.13–14. CLARK, Peter. *British Clubs and Societies (1580–1800)*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, pp. 7–9.
[224] CLARK, Peter. *British Clubs and Societies (1580–1800)*, p. 177.

turmoil, which was sensed by many as the verge of another revolution.[225] In other words, he saw politeness as a tool to cool the faction and stabilize the community, uniting its members in the joint enterprise of protecting the rules of justice and looking after the public good.[226] As Laurence E. Klein asserts, in the eighteenth century, "the language of politeness became a major fixture of English discourse", recasting contemporary models of history and reinforcing the values of civil liberty.[227]

Hume's and other polite historians' relationship with what they considered non-polite forms of learning and writing history was paradoxical. Even though they failed to fully appreciate the techniques and methods of antiquarians and pamphleteers, they benefited from them. Instead of a total rupture between the pre-Enlightenment erudite scholarship and polite philosophical historians like Hume, there are essential aspects of continuity.[228] A crucial factor is the fact that a significant part of the documents assembled to the composition of Hume's, Robertson's, and Gibbon's texts had already been decodified and assessed by family and antiquarian historians.[229] Even though philosophical historians offered new interpretations to the facts contained in those materials and mobilized different techniques to fit those considerations into their narratives, they valued the work of antiquarians, collectors, compilers, and indexers.

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[225] SABL, Andrew. *Hume's Politics: Coordination and Crisis in the History of England*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012, pp. 55–57.

[226] O'GORMAN, Frank. *The Long Eighteenth Century*, pp. 352–354. Also see

[227] KLEIN, Laurence E. Liberty, Manners, and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England. *The Historical Journal*, v. 32, n. 3, pp. 583–585.

[228] MILLER, Peter N. Introduction: Momigliano, Antiquarianism, and the Cultural Sciences. In: MILLER, Peter N (ed.). *Momigliano and Antiquarianism: Foundations of the Modern Cultural Sciences.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014, pp. 12–14.

[229] Especially Hume's Medieval Volume largely depends on the works of Antiquarians. Sir Robert Brady (1627–1700), for example, was an important reference for Hume when making his considerations about the feudal system and the feudal law. For more on this, see BURKE, Peter. From Antiquarianism to Anthropology. In: MILLER, Peter N (ed.). *Momigliano and Antiquarianism: Foundations of the Modern Cultural Sciences.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014, p. 236. POCOCK, J.G.A. Robert Brady, 1627–1700, p. 191.

Those agents dedicated themselves full-time to historical work, a time most mid-eighteenth-century genteel historians, like Hume, did not have.

As John Phillips Kenyon emphasized, in the 1700s, it was natural for philosophical historians to compile their large accounts of a more distant past largely from secondary authorities "without being thought any the worse for it."[230] In fact, it was exactly because of those ultra-specialized figures that Hume could climb the ladder of literary genres by moving from the less noble treatises to the more respected essays, before finally arriving at the noblest of all prose genres: history. Of course, as the Keeper of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, he did a lot of research and compilation by himself, but it was not enough to arrive where he wanted. Like many other erudite, talented, and philosophically minded British historians, he was under constant editorial pressure quickly to write a meaningful and all-encompassing *History of England*. As a consequence, doing it so fast was only possible in the light of a consolidated and efficient pre-Enlightenment tradition of compiling sources and building majestic libraries.

Hume worked on his history as a man of letters who continued the program to reform political culture and the moral agenda initiated by Addison, Steele, and Defoe.[231] By 1757, after completing the first two volumes of his *History*, "Hume had mastered it, becoming one of the most respected men of letters in the island of Great Britain."[232] As put by Philip Hicks, he definitely got into an elite and intellectual circle in the continent.[233] That is made clear when we consider that three kings of France acclaimed his writings. King Louis XVI, for example, was obsessed with Hume's

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[230] KEYNON, J.P. *The History Men: The Historical Profession in England since the Restoration*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983, pp. 7–8.
[231] HORN MELTON, James van. *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 96. Horn Melton makes other interesting considerations about "the culture of politeness" in his reflections on the rise of the salons in the eighteenth-century. See *The Rise of Public*, pp. 199–202.
[232] HICKS, Philip. *Neoclassical History and English Culture*, p. 172.
[233] HICKS, Philip. *Neoclassical History and English Culture*. p. 172.

description of Charles I's last moments. Louis' relationship with Hume's *History of England* was so intense that Hume's volumes about the late Stuarts were incorporated into the king's defense in his trial.[234] Also, French philosophers who had not recognized Hume for his philosophical works seemed enthusiastic about his historical side.[235]

Hume considered central themes of his philosophically minded *History*, the fight for liberty and the path to civilization, both Europe-wide phenomena. He also saw himself as writing to the English and to his fellow Scots, among whom the *History of England* became very popular, as, after 1707, English history had become Scottish history as well.[236] In any case, it is interesting to observe that while Hume was writing his *History of England*, William Robertson was writing about Scotland's history and they constantly exchanged correspondence fulfilled with compliments and criticisms to each other's ongoing projects.[237] In the end, Robertson, and also Gibbon, earned a similar reputation to that of Hume—historians who mended the weakness of Britain's historical culture.[238] Phillip Hicks defends that Hume did not appear out of anywhere to give the British their general history written to classical standards. According Victor Wexler and him, in the decades before the publication of his *History of England*, the transformations in English and Scottish society had helped to furnish Hume with the role of his professional man of letters, offering some of the requisite source materials and with an audience more inclined to his polite, neoclassical performance.[239]

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[234] WEXLER, Victor G. *David Hume and the History of England*, p. 95.
[235] Voltaire and Montesquieu were admirers of Hume's historical work. Especially the latter exchanged letters with Hume, and Hume himself suggested corrections and adaptations to Montesquieu's *L'Espirit des Lois*. See HL 133–138.
[236] WEXLER, Victor G. *David Hume and the History of England*, p. 95.
[237] HL 1:287–294, 314–315.
[238] PHILLIPS, Mark Salber. *Society and Sentiment*, p. 342.
[239] WEXLER, Victor G. *David Hume and the History of England*, p. 95. HICKS, Philip. *Neoclassical History and English Culture.*

Like most philosophical historians, Hume wrote for middle-class and upper-rank citizens. Despite not aiming at the lowest ranks of society, a criticism later made by nineteenth-century scholars and critics, the movement towards specific segments of the urban middling sorts of society meant a significant enlargement in the consumption of histories in the second half of the eighteenth century. It also revealed a new interest in targeting an immediate audience easily reached by the printing press. Hume claimed that his history was "calculated to be popular"[240], at least more popular than his philosophical writings, which ended up reaching a very restricted audience in rather specific circles. This way, his *History of England* was designed to be the main vehicle for him to communicate to more citizens certain ideas he had already suggested in previous writings, such as those of justice and politeness as the foundational moral and political institutions.[241]

Even though eighteenth-century philosophical history was not perceived in the nineteenth century as the most popularized genre of historical writing—as the *History of England*'s posterior reception proves, it was responsible for a significant shift in historical thinking. Its leading exponents pointed out the deficiency and limited approach of previous traditions and they successfully reached other readers. For most of them, up until the first quarter of the eighteenth century, history had been excessively particular, and no historians—perhaps except for Rapin—had turned themselves to a full and encompassing description of a people, its costumes, and institutions. It should be remarked that such a claim does not mean philosophical historians abandoned concerns with narrative and its flow. On the contrary, philosophical history intended to fit historical explanations, accounts of human nature, and action in the flow of the narrative.[242] A direct consequence of such a fact is that,

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[240] HL 1:217.
[241] TOLONEN, Mikko. Mandeville and Hume: Anatomists of Civil Society. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 22.
[242] WERTZ, Spencer K. Hume, History, and Human Nature. *Journal of the History of Ideas,* v. 36, 1975, pp. 481–496.

in the eighteenth century, in Britain and other parts of Europe, it was common to hear that philosophers were expected to write history.[243]

As a genre of historical writing, philosophical history comprised new objects and innovative methods to approach them. Even though the nineteenth century stereotyped the philosophical method as a copy of the humanist ones, there were significant alterations usually guided by the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scientific and empiricist ideals. There were new emphases on manners, opinions, and social experiences. Although philosophical history did not abolish the authority of the narrative of public events, it at least repositioned it. In the eighteenth century, especially in Britain, history and philosophy had Newtonian inspirations, which meant philosophically minded historians believed in the scientific eye. They conducted their observations of the past under methodological protocols and detailed exams of the facts. As some of his contemporaries, Hume intended to give his *History* and most of his philosophical work a statute like the one Newton had given to physics and his treatises. In his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* Hume ponders that there is no reason not to consider that research about mental faculties and economies can be as successful as the ones that determined the forces and laws governing and driving the revolutions of the planets if they are done with the same proficiency and care.[244] The philosophically minded critique and scientifically oriented historiography of the Enlightenment had close ties to a more wide-ranging science of men.

As Hume stated:

> These records of wars, intrigues, factions, and revolutions are so many collections of experiments, by which the politician or moral philosopher fixes the principles of his science, in the same manner as the physician or

[243] MOSSNER, Ernest. *The Life of David Hume*, pp. 300–302. Since philosophers furnished historians with the theoretical foundation of human nature, behaviors, and institutions, they themselves were suited for history writing. Similar considerations on the situation of Voltaire are made in MÉRICAM-BOURDET, Myrtille. *Voltaire et l'Écriture de l'Histoire: Un Enjeu Politique.* Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2012.
[244] EHU 12.1.

> natural philosopher becomes acquainted with the nature of plants, minerals, and other external objects, by the experiments which he forms concerning them. Nor are the earth, water, and other elements, examined by Aristotle, and Hippocrates, more like to those which at present lie under our observation than the men described by Polybius and Tacitus are to those who now govern the world.[245]

The adequacy of the new proposed methodology required philosophical history to design a new narrative style based on two basic principles: conciseness and clarity. It meant twisting some older conventions to fit the mold of shorter and more direct language, which aspired to convey precision and objectivity. That language is a mirror of the attitude of the enlightened historian in most parts of Western Europe: the impartial, just, and precise narrator of events described in documents, chronicles, and testimonies. In other words, their linguistic protocols had to be conceived in such a manner that it reflected the rational criticism of sources and textual references incorporated into the text.[246]

Concerning the full text length, philosophical histories were usually long, divided into many volumes, and serialized for publication. However, on a phrasal level, the arguments contained in the sentences were built more concisely, especially if compared to part of the nineteenth-century historical writing based upon a romantic paradigm.[247] That is a probable reason to why some argue that the romantic style obfuscated most of the Western historiography of Enlightenment's inheritance.[248] Eighteenth-century historiography is not poetical and does not mention Divine Providence; oppositely, it aims to create identification between the reader and the thoughts and sentiments of the leading agents in historical drama. In the philosophical history project, the self-professed impartial eye towards the sentiments of all,

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[245] EHU 8.1.
[246] MUNOZ, Núria. Detrás de las palabras, pp. 203–205.
[247] ALBIERI, Sara. David Hume: Filósofo e Historiador. *Mediações: Revista de Ciências Sociais,* v.9, n.2, 2004, p. 24.
[248] ALBIERI, Sara. David Hume: Filósofo e Historiador, p. 24.

monarchs, republicans, and ordinary men and women mingled perfectly with some moments of irony to awaken the sentiments and reactions of all.[249]

Like others, such as Robertson, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and some of their contemporaries, Hume's *History of England* was motivated by a critical and rational trust in historiography. Moreover, the book clearly intended to intervene in the British Enlightenment's political theory debate. Eighteenth-century philosophical historians were commonly immersed in public life and worked towards the incentive of helping forge a coherent identity in society. Despite his mobilization of the language of impartiality, Hume seemed to have a clear idea in mind and desired to abolish it: the origins of faction and zealotry lie in the perception that most Englishmen did not comprehend the innovative nature of their mixed constitution. As Sara Albieri put it, Hume treats the English constitution, throughout most of the book, from a perspective of explicit anti-contractarianism.[250] For Hume, an essential notion to all citizens, not only *Whigs* or *Tories*, was that the freedom obtained by the English in the eighteenth century was a singular event, unique in the European context, and it owed such a status to the also individual character of the English constitution. Nevertheless, Hume's more outstanding merit is the one-off working from a perspective that allowed him to fill his text with characters as opposite as Joan of Arc and Charles I. Even though Hume overlooks problematic issues such as colonialism, his diverse theory of human nature and morals opened space for portraying a vast array of historical agents that reflected central notions of British society as it moved from the ancient times to the eighteenth century.

## 3.2. *The History of Great Britain*'s First Volumes

Scholars of David Hume's life and works, especially his biographers, point out several reasons for Hume's mid-life turn to history writing. Although most consent that

[249] ALBIERI, Sara. David Hume: Filósofo e Historiador, p. 25.
[250] ALBIERI, Sara. David Hume: Filósofo e Historiador, p. 26.

his project of writing a national history of England started in the first half of the 1740s, they occasionally disagree on Hume's primary motivation. Nicholas Phillipson, for example, stressed that Hume's movement towards history writing was mainly due to a powerful desire to deepen explanations about specific elements of Britain's political configurations, elements he had already investigated in some of his *Essays* and a few parts of the *Political Discourses.*[251] Differently, Ernest Mossner upheld that Hume's prevailing intention behind the *History's* composition arose predominantly from his desire to historicize his past contemplations of human nature, since Hume believed it was a historian's task to provide the materials with which philosophers would then theorize about the very principles of human thinking and conduct.[252] James Harris, in turn, offers a different and more encompassing explanation as to why Hume came to write a *History of England*. In agreement with Phillipson and Mossner, Harris recalls that Hume was indeed moved by a desire to historicize in-depth earlier reflections on politics and philosophy. Harris moreover agrees with both when he states that Hume believed history was the principal substrate of forceful philosophical inquiries about various subjects, including human nature. However, from Harris' standpoint the road leading to the *History*'s composition was more sinuous and demanded further and more sophisticated reflections than those advanced by his fellow earlier biographers.

First, Hume's long-term desire for literary fame intersects with other factors. The years of 1751 and 1752 were opportune moments for Hume to be in Edinburgh, and a few happenings from that time influenced the *History's* composition. First, Adam Smith, instigated by Kames, was writing a series of lectures on rhetoric and jurisprudence that were quite Humean in inspiration.[253] Second, Kames himself was in the process of publishing several texts on the historical and philosophical qualities of law, with certain parts engaging in critical dialog with Hume's *Treatise.*[254] Both

[251] PHILLIPSON, Nicholas. *David Hume*, p. 50–52.
[252] MOSSNER, Ernest. *The Life of David Hume*, p. 301.
[253] HARRIS, James. *Hume: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 305.
[254] HARRIS, James. *Hume: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 305.

factors led to Hume's definite recognition as a prominent figure in Edinburgh's literary circle and suggested a better reception of a forthcoming text by Hume. Third, soon after Hume arrived in Edinburgh in 1751, he was elected Secretary to the Philosophical Society, a club that, revived by Kames in the late 1740, encouraged its members to cultivate the sort of politeness and moderation Hume had been pursuing in his *Essays* and *Enquiries*.[255] Fourth, in 1752, Hume was appointed Keeper of the Advocates' Library, one of the largest and most complete libraries in Edinburgh. Finally, it should not be forgotten that, as we shall reinforce further ahead, Hume needed a significant amount of money to live a self-reliant and decent life in a pricey city like mid-century Edinburgh. In sum, as Harris implies, the *History* is a result of a juxtaposition of factors and opportunities, summarized under a combination of a long-term desire for widespread acclaim—renewed and intensified by Hume's arrival in Scotland's capital in the early 1750s—and the perception that a successful and top-selling historical text could offer a nearly forty-year-old Hume enough money to live a comfortable rest of life.

Regarding the *History of England's* gestation, Harris insightfully upholds that Hume could not have started conceiving the whole text from scratch in the early 1750s. For Harris, it is undoubtful that Hume's 1752 election as Keeper of the Advocates' Library was a crucial moment in his career as a historian since it allowed access to most of the materials the author needed to start composing his *History*.[256] However, the speed within the *History* is revealing of the serious possibility that by the spring of 1752, when Hume started working at the library, the contents of parts of those materials had already been mapped—more likely read—and specific segments of text at least drafted or sketched.[257] As Harris affirms, it is impossible to reconstruct precisely when and how the text was written, but Hume's vocabularies in the essays

[255] HARRIS, James. *Hume: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 306.
[256] HARRIS, James. *Hume: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 307.
[257] HARRIS, James. *Hume: An Intellectual Biography*, pp. 325–326.

from the late 1740s and plenty of personal correspondence from the period of isolation and intense historical reading at his family estate, in the surroundings of Edinburgh, in Ninewells, between 1749 and 1751, quite strongly suggest Hume's previous engagement with an early development of the *History's* project. [258] As Moritz Baumstark stresses, even though between 1749 and 1751 the *History* was not Hume's immediate concern, he was, in some way, intimately involved with it at the period.[259] For instance, at the end of 1748, for the first time, Hume referred to a *History*, in capital "H", in a letter.[260] Despite slight disagreements between Harris and Baumstark about the ways Hume had engrossed his attention to his historical enterprise before 1752, both agree that scholarship on Hume's writings has systematically neglected the importance of the two-year reclusion period in Ninewells to the *History's* posterior outcome.

Concerning the first publication of the text, a triangulation of the correspondence between Hume, Andrew Millar, his publisher, and William Strahan, Millar's printer—who later became a close friend of Hume's and one of his will executors [261] —reveals a sense of urgency in publishing the early volumes of the *History* after they had been written. From the publisher's and printer's sides, the imperativeness was due to the potential of the material, which Millar—whose knowledge of the publishing market made him one of the wealthiest merchants in Britain[262]—recognized since very early as capable of possessing intimidating stature.

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[258] HARRIS, James. *Hume: An Intellectual Biography*, pp. 248–250; BAUMSTARK, Moritz. Hume's Readings of the Classics at Ninewells. In: *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*, v. 8, n. 1, 2010, pp. 63–77.

[259] HL 1:109 (a letter from 1748) is the first known letter in which Hume refers to a "History" in capital letters.

[260] BAUMSTARK, Moritz. *David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian. A Reconsideration.* Doctoral Thesis. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2007, p. 119.

[261] WALDMANN, Felix. David Hume in Chicago: A Twentieth Century Hoax. *Journal of British Studies*, v. 59, 2020, p. 793.

[262] BUDD, Adam. *Circulating Enlightenment: The Carrer and Correspondence of Andrew Millar (1725–68).* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press and Oxford University Press USA, 2020, p. XXXIV.

From Hume's side, the rush was likely to be mainly due to a pair of reasons. The first was Hume's need, as mentioned above, to increase his revenue when he moved from his family's country estate, in Ninewells, to the hustle and bustle of Edinburgh, where he made home with his sister Katherine, in 1751.[263] Scotland's capital, which Hume recognized as the "true scene for a man of letters"[264], had a relatively high cost of living and demanded him to find a way to pay his bills. The second, as James Harris emphasizes, is that Hume desired to have a position, a role, in the life of the city.[265] The latter is intrinsically connected Hume's desire to become an eminent, or distinguished, man of letters, as both Ernest Mossner and Victor Wexler have reminded us.[266] Despite devoting exceptional attention to the success of all his previous writings, almost all of Hume's texts sank into oblivion quickly. In that manner, rejection and material needs convey the impression of having contributed to his vitality and urgency in pursuing the *History of England.* After scrutiny of several personal letters from Hume, Wexler curiously concluded that Hume "may have been gracious as an old man, but he could not have been so early in his life, even if he wished to. He was too poor and insecure. None of his great works made him rich or well-known until his *History of England* became a best-seller."[267] In any way, the small fortune Hume accumulated at the end of his life indicates that history was a prestigious and lucrative literary genre for successful writers in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Hume's *History of England* is a colossal work that monopolized more than a decade of its author's life, a man who, as stated before, openly desired to become widely recognized as a writer. In spite of certain blanks and gaps that hinder a perfect reconstruction of the process whereby the *History of England* took shape, its development is better documented than any other of Hume's texts due to the

[263] HARRIS, James. *Hume: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 305.
[264] HL 1:3.
[265] HARRIS, James. *Hume: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 307.
[266] WEXLER, Victor. *David Hume and the History of England*, p. 2. MOSSNER, Ernest. *The Life of David Hume*, pp. 221–222.
[267] WEXLER, Victor. *David Hume and the History of England*, p. 2.

considerable secondary literature on it.[268] In any case, it was not until Moritz Baumstark published his doctoral thesis at the University of Edinburgh in 2007 that there was a successful attempt to re-enact the genesis of a fundamental part of the *History of England*—the two volumes that kick-started it under the title of *The History of Great Britain*, in 1754 and 1756. As cited above, the two volumes were a direct product of Hume's intense studies in Ninewells and a combination of events that, in 1751, brought Hume back to Scotland's capital and led him to take the vacant post of Keeper in the Advocates' Library, in Edinburgh. The job at the library, with the vast collection it possessed, and the intense periods of study, especially in Ninewells, fundamentally shaped the historical questions Hume posed to the materials he had at hand throughout his historical inquiries.

In the Advocates' Library, Hume was responsible for taking care of its expansive collection, which allowed for his boundless use of it, as well as for buying new texts to increase it. It is important to remark that the right to do so without preceding authorization from the curators was to be withdrawn in 1754. In a footnote to his 2007 doctoral thesis, Baumstark, inspired by Michael Harris[269] and Brian Hillyard,[270] said this controversy had yet to be explored.[271] The fundamental importance of this event was later reconstructed by Felix Waldmann.[272] According to Waldmann, in April 1754, Hume ordered several books from Thomas Osborne, a London bookdealer, and publisher. On auditing the purchase later, the local curators considered some of the books, especially three exemplars of French modern philosophical literature, indecent. Then, the curators' inspection of Hume's acquisitions of the three offending books led

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[268] BAUMSTARK, Moritz*. David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian,* p. 119.
[269] HARRIS, Michael H. David Hume: Scholar as Librarian. In: The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy, v. 36, n. 2, 1966, pp. 88–98.
[270] HILLYARD, Brian. The Keepership of David Hume. In: CADELL, Patrick, MATHESON, Ann (eds.). *For the Encouragement of Learning: Scotland's National Library, 1689–1989*. Edinburgh: HMSO, 1989, pp. 103-109.
[271] BAUMSTARK, Moritz. *David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian*, p. 129.
[272] WALDMANN, Felix. Two Lost Items of *Humeana.* In: The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society, v. 23, n. 3, 2022, pp. 386–393.

to intense correspondence between both parties and the faculty dean. Demands were made from both sides, with Hume usually defending that the books be restored to the shelves. At the same time, the staff firmly clung to the decision of definitely banning the forbidden texts.[273] After a long impasse about the destiny of the prohibited books, Hume sensed he had lost the battle. He then offered his resignation from the position he had held for a bit more than two years.[274] In any manner, what catches the eye is the correspondence exchanged between Hume and the Faculty staff. The letters are revealing of Hume's interest in the more recent French anti-clerical historical and philosophical literature, especially Crébillon's *Tanzaï et Néadarné, histoire japonaise* (incorrectly known as *L'Ecumoire: histoire japonaise*).[275] Such an interest allegedly helped shape his ironic critiques of religion in his forthcoming *The History of Great Britain* and *The Natural History of Religion.*[276] Be that as it may, the resignation and consequential unemployment threw Hume into another two years of a recluse and studious period that resulted in the composition of the most considerable portion of the first two volumes of the *The History of Great Britain*, the first printed and published in 1754.[277]

When Hume started writing his principal historical work, the initial idea was to narrate the history of Stuart England, from the Union of the Crowns, in 1603, to the Hanoverian Succession, in 1714, or maybe to his present-day. As he stated in several letters to his friends and William Straham, Stuart England offered the most curious, interesting, and instructive part of British history.[278] This is also why he initially chose the title *The History of Great Britain* for the forthcoming text. The work Hume had in mind in the early 1750s was a three-volume history of Great Britain that included its

[273] WALDMANN, Felix. Two Lost Items of *Humeana*, p. 387.
[274] HL 1:212–213.
[275] MAIOLI, Roger. David Hume, Literary Cognitivism, and the Truth of the Novel. *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900,* v. 54, n. 3, p. 636.
[276] MOSSNER, Ernest. *The Life of David Hume*, pp. 423–440.
[277] HL 1:213.
[278] BAUMSTARK, Moritz. *David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian*, p. 143–144.

pre-history, starting in 1603, and which went beyond the Act of Union of 1707. By the time the two first volumes had been printed in 1756, supposedly only one volume remained to be published. This last volume would range from the Revolution of 1688 to the Ascension of the House of Hanover or his present-day. However, somewhere in 1756 or 1757, Hume took up on the advice of a couple of his friends and reviewers to give up continuing his narrative beyond 1688. He then decided to move towards the more distant past of England's history, writing on the Tudors, the Middle Ages, and the Antiquity.[279]

The totality of the reasons leading Hume to abandon his project of writing an entire *History of Great Britain* still need to be clarified. Nevertheless, early responses to the text in 1754 and 1755 reveal Hume's unexpected disappointment with its reception. As Hume's autobiographical piece *My Own Life* and exchanges of letters with his printer and publisher suggest, the author was highly criticized and severely accused of the most blatant violation an eighteenth-century Enlightened historian could commit: being partial.[280] It is very much likely that this sense of disappointment overwhelmingly influenced him to reconsider the original plan of a three-volume *History of Great Britain* and ponder embarking on a Tudor history instead. As letters suggest, Hume considered his first volume a fine piece, with a "noble subject" and overflowing with the "greater ornaments of eloquence and nicer distinctions of reasoning."[281] Still, as he also admitted, contemporary partisanship, prejudice, and

[279] It is important to point out that, according to Frederic L. van Holthoon, Hume reconsidered writing a contemporary volume of his *History of England* in 1763. It what would be the seventh volume of the *History,* published the year before. That continuation was supposed to go beyond 1688 and would resume Hume's original project of writing about the eighteenth century. Van Holthoon asserts that his definite refusal and desistence of the continuation was due to a disagreement with Andrew Millar in the process of revising his *History* for the 1763 edition. See van Holthoon, Frederic L. Hume and the 1763 Edition of his History or England, pp. 134–135.
[280] HL 1:4–5. HL 1:217–219.
[281] HL 1:240.

factionalism blinded the audience, who, incapable of standing above political division, would never recognize his impartiality, judgment, and care.[282]

In any way, it should not be forgotten that the decision to go backward in time in his project was not easy for Hume. The periods after the Glorious Revolution appealed much more to him since they were more amusing and instructing to his present-time and posterity than the diving into old, dark, and barbarous medieval times.[283] It is also important to emphasize that the two-volume history continued to be commercialized under the title *The History of Great Britain* for at least five years when, in 1761 and 1762, the other four volumes ranging from the Roman invasion to the end of the Tudor era could finally be published. Only then was the title *The History of Great Britain* abandoned, and the text incorporated into the much larger project entitled *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*.[284]

[282] HL 1:240–241.
[283] HL 1:243.
[284] JESSOP, T. E. *A Bibliography of David Hume and of Scottish Philosophy from Francis Hutcheson to Lord Balfour*. London: A. Brown & Sons, 1938, pp. 30–31.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## THE METHOD INTO PRACTICE: *THE HISTORY OF ENGLAND*

At the early stages of *The History of Great Britain*'s composition, Hume imagined that the adequate answers to the main questions he was posing to the past at the moment, such as the origins of British party faction and excessive political and religious zealotry, were in England's relatively recent Stuart past. However, as he advanced in his writings, and the *History of Great Britain*'s first two volumes began to be printed and published, a multiplicity of factors, as detailed in Chapter Three, made him move backward towards a more encompassing history of England. The new project had to be abridging enough to include the centuries before the seventeenth all the way down to the Roman Invasion of Britain in AD 43. In sum, this is how a three-volume *History of Great Britain* relatively soon became a six-volume *History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*. It should also be added that, as stated in Chapter Three, prior to his election as Keeper of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh in 1752, there is evidence that Hume had at least sketched what his forthcoming history book would be and enunciated, although in disconnected form, the sound theoretical and methodological bases of his historical thought. Therefore, in the early 1750s, the *History of England* was a roughly drafted project in which Hume's scattered—but more or less coherent—elaborations on history, historical theory, and the historical process would later converge to result in a dense and complex historical text.

*The History of England* makes evident several aspects of Hume's engagement with historical knowledge. First, in terms of genre, it can be considered an exemplar of eighteenth-century Enlightened philosophical history since it explains its objects with frequent references and extensive inferences of universal and stable general causes.[285] In fact, causal analysis reflects its importance in Hume's historical practice

[285] WERTZ, Stephen K. Hume, History, and Human Nature, p. 481.

when we notice that for the writer only events or structures traceable to identifiable networks of general causation belonged within the realm of history.[286] Second, the lengthy and multi-layered *History* written by Hume is a conjectural history of civil society, the government and its institutions, as well as of certain elements of culture, manners, and learning in England.[287] That can be said especially if we understand the label "conjectural history" in the way Roger L. Emerson suggested in his text *Conjectural History and Scottish Philosophers*, as a "naturalistic or rational account of the origin and development of institutions, beliefs, or practices".[288] Third, it should be remarked that the text is also a teleological history of the main political and, on a lesser degree, economical events that culminated in the formation of a commercial society in Britain in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. A sympathizer of the 1700s British commercial polity, for Hume, its establishment was one of the thrilling climaxes of the historical process the *History of England* narrates.[289] Finally, the *History* is also a historical and epistemological investigation of the role of religion, superstition, and the marvelous in the structure of thought of the average middle-class modern British citizen, the main sort of reader a deeply skeptical Hume was addressing in the mid-1750s. In short, the *History of England* was Hume's main vehicle to moderately and politely persuade his audience that—despite the sinuous and unpredictable path of history—modern Britain and Europe, with their still imperfect and

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[286] POMPA, Leon. *Human Nature and Historical Knowledge: Hume, Hegel and Vico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 24. See also E 14–16.

[287] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, p. 48. Phillips also makes broader considerations on conjectural history on pp. 171–190. For him, the "conjectural history" advancements represent the "most ambitious development in eighteenth-century historical writing", p. 171.

[288] EMERSON, Roger L. Conjectural History and Scottish Philosophers. *Historical Papers*. v. 19, n. 1, 1984, p. 65.

[289] Hume's considerations on economic development and its relationship to the history and the progress of civilization are summarized by BERRY, Christopher J. In: *Essays on Hume, Smith, and the Scottish Enlightenment.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018, pp. 184–207. Berry argues that for Hume, the transition from a savage, barbarous society to a civilized, luxurious one represents and advancement in customs and manners, pp. 185–186.

at times precarious institutions and legal systems, were better than the past, even the cherished antique past.

When it comes to *The History of England*'s main presentation aspects, its explanatory devices and exemplifying moves are also rather revealing of Hume's relationship with the "practical past" he addresses in the text. By borrowing Hayden White's expression "practical past", I refer to the portion of the past Hume felt competent to study and which his historical method allowed him to investigate.[290] In harmony with some contemporary philosophers and historians who called for renewed and more meaningful historical approaches to the past, such as Robertson and Gibbon, Hume made his *History of* England, among other things, a grand narrative of a specific historical process: the one explaining the general evolution and progress of human social organization from a crude and primitive state to a civilized condition in England. Such a progression, despite certain historical setbacks, like the English Civil Wars and numerous insurrections and rebellions, directly affected the correlate configuration of the English citizens' behaviors, cultural and political institutions, justice, morals, and manners. In any case, regarding particularly the structure of Hume's historical explanation in the text, his argument and intention are based on the underlying assumption that the nature of England's mixed Constitution was indeed very peculiar and the product of historical chance rather than conscious design. Hume also tried to justify the claim that the Constitution should be kept despite its flaws and problems since it is only in at least relative political stability—as opposed to revolution or turmoil—that a nation, its institutions, culture, and citizens can flourish to their greatest potential.[291]

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[290] WHITE, Hayden. *The Practical Past*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014, pp. 8–24. It is important to emphasize that White himself borrowed the expression from the conservative philosopher Michael Oakeshott.
[291] HE 5.71:530–534.

# *Four*
## *The Method into Practice*

If we consider Hume's awareness of his present-day motivations for writing a historical text, the *History of England* is to be seen as the intellectual product of a man compromised with modernity and an understanding of the modern present as a better place than the past. In that sense, the attention to the historical past that marks his historical enterprise was fueled by his intention to justify the imperfect superiority of his own time when compared to earlier days. Ever since the 1740s and his retreat in France, Hume became familiar with texts and opinions surrounding *the querelle des anciens et des modernes*, especially the opposite positions both parts of the *querelle* had concerning the relationship between the past and the present.[292] Hume himself nurtured a paradoxical feeling towards antiquity and ancient historians. On the one hand, he did not reject classical writers and admired many of them, such as Thucydides, Tacitus, and Livy, as well as their rhetorical strategies and technical skills. However, on the other, his view of the ancient historians was deeply connected to his personal views of the classical past, seen as a place that taught him and his contemporaries about things vital to their present-day experiences and understanding of the world, but not a time and place to which they wanted to return. In Hume's understanding of the general historical process, the antiquity was a distant place, foreign in many aspects, and overall, less civilized than the present. In the *History of* England, Hume's attitude towards antiquity allows us to imply that he was not partly nostalgic about ancient culture, manners, and institutions.[293] In fact, his attitude towards the classical past and its cultural products, similarly to other contemporary historians and less nostalgic classicists, was that of emulation of antiquity's finest and most instructive examples and models together with a general praise of modern

[292] EDELSTEIN, Dan. *The Enlightenment*, p. 104.
[293] WATKINS, Margaret. *The Philosophical Progress of Hume's Essays*, p. 7.

times.[294] As I see, the *History of Enlgand* was representative of a compromise to a sort of modernism deeply respectful (and not fully nostalgic) to classicism.

While the previous chapter briefly described the alterations *The History of Great Britain* had undergone before turning into *The History of England*, the present chapter will dig deeper into the final structure of *The History of England* and its contents. It is noteworthy mentioning that, despite the introduction of substantial thematic and temporal changes throughout the path of making *The History of Great Britain* a *History of England*, fundamental aspects of Hume's historical style remained untouched in the altered project. One of them was Hume's underlying conservative notion of historical time and continuity. In that sense, Hume's historical time in the text is essentially chronological and politically orientated, with each of the *History of England*'s seventy-one chapters discussing a reign, a form of government, or parts of either. For example, the very first chapter of the book, Chapter One, depicts mainly the Britons' life, culture, customs, and political organization at the time of the Roman Invasion.[295] Additionally, following precisely the same compositional logic and orientation, Chapter Seventy-One, the last of all, primarily details the conduct of the prince of Orange, his declaration, and aspects of England's political, social, and cultural life at the dawn of the events in 1688.[296]

In any case, even though Hume's text is more than a mere history of England's key political events, the author's sophisticated discussions about manners, behaviors, and other aspects of England's social and cultural conditions possess a historical continuity of their own. As considerations are less dependent of a strict political chronological threading, they commonly appear pulverized those inside specific

[294] ATAÇ, C. Akça. Roman Historiography of Eighteenth Century Britain Beyond Gibbon: Ancient Norms of Empire for Moderns. In: BOURGAULT, Sophie, SPARLING, Robert. *A Companion to Enlightenment Historiography*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013, pp. 469–471.
[295] HE 1.1.
[296] HE 6.71.

sections of the numbered chapter or in the four appendices he placed immediately after Chapters Three, Eleven, Forty-Four, and Forty-Nine. The appendices a product of the long and intricate process of revision of *The History of England* until its last corrections in the 1770s.[297] With a temporal sequence of their own, designed not to primarily explain events, but rather structures, Hume's appendices are erudite, or antiquarian-like, digressions from the main text that seem very Tacitean in inspiration. More oriented by thematic criteria than chronological ones, the appendices possess strong social and cultural history overtones.[298] Appendix Four, for example, devotes a segment to the socio-cultural histories of the army, the navy, manufacture, and learning and the arts immediately after James I's reign.[299] Hume's final decision to use this type of division, with chapters and appendices separated, overall privileging a chronological orientation guided by key political events, is not sufficient clarified. It resulted in an over-conservative notion of historical continuity in his most important history book. It is even more astonishing if we consider the fact that he did not employ the same logic to compose his earlier political and more historical essays, where he began to elaborate shorter socio-cultural histories of commerce, luxury, and certain aspects of the progress and evolution of civilization towards Europe's societies of the modern times. As a matter of fact, those essays serve as excellent illustrations of an updated understanding of historical continuity in the eighteenth century.

At any rate, regarding this chapter's proposed analysis of Hume's historiographical practice in the *History of England*, section 4.1 will offer an overview of the text's main compositional guidelines, themes, and its structure. Even though some of its ideas were anticipated in this chapter overview, 4.1 develops them in

[297] The Appendixes themselves have an interesting history of their own as they were not always appendices. Appendix Four, for example, was the first to be written and was not an appendix until the 1770 edition came out. Further investigation on the editorial history of the appendixes still needs to be carried out.
[298] MOMIGLIANO, Arnaldo. *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, Press, 1990, p. 111.
[299] HE 5.App.4:140–156.

further detail. By and large, this segment presents the main historical process Hume narrates in the *History*, the techniques he used to articulate his principal themes, and the extent of certain continuities and ruptures with previous traditions of historical writing. Additionally, the section also refers to the text's structure, commenting on how it reflects specific impulses and narratological practices of the eighteenth-century historiographical practice in Britain and other parts of Europe.

Section 4.2 then considers central aspects of Hume's historical presentation. It presupposes that Hume's narrative is a combination of descriptive and explanatory procedures—a complex articulation of historical descriptions, frames, and certain forms of explanation. Using the language of eighteenth-century treatises on rhetoric and belles lettres, such as Adam Smith's and Hugh Blair's, the section divides the descriptions Hume pursues in the *History* into two kinds: direct and indirect. It also defends that Hume's indirect descriptions were one of the most remarkable and distinctive presentation features of the text since through them the writer was able to paint character portraits and put in practice strategies devised to arouse readers' sympathies towards many of the subjects he referred to. In addition, the section shows that the text's descriptive moves are largely dependent on a socio-psychological view of the past and its agents.

Section 4.3 refers to two rhetorical tools intimately connected to the *topos* of impartiality invoked in section 2.4. Both techniques stand as distinctive features of Hume's self-claimed impartial account of the past. As section 4.3 argues, Hume's quest for impartiality was so vital a component of his practice that it demanded him to emulate political debates and fictionalize speeches whenever he intended to do justice to a party or concede isonomy to the two opposing parts involved in the discussions he brought to the fore. Hume's *History of England* contains a few of those moments, most derived from the original text of *The History of Great Britain*, and they are interesting doors for reflection on the degree of open fictionalization Hume allowed his

text to possess. They also show us how much probable reasoning and inference Hume made from his sources when fictionalizing speeches and discussions.

Finishing Chapter Four, section 4.4 upholds that the composition of *The History of England* derives from a Humean notion of historiographical impartiality that is intimately linked to his conception of mitigated skepticism, as theorized in the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.[300] Moreover, 4.4 asserts that Hume's moderate skepticism oriented him through the process of judging and assessing his sources and inspired him to the use the language of impartiality, moderation, and politeness to compose his text. Section 4.4 also argues in the direction that Hume's revision of his original skeptical ideal stands as a proof that reframing or re-elaborating ideas and notions was an important feature of his intellectual development, which dramatically affected his historical and philosophical methods as well as many of his posterior writings.

### 4.1. Guidelines, Themes, and the Structure of the Text

From the moment Hume gave up on writing a *History of Great Britain* from the Union of the Crowns in 1603 to the Hanoverian Succession of 1714 and decided to move backward, toward the Middle Ages and the Antiquity, his original project drastically changed. Instead of the initial self-imposed program of addressing and explaining the recent political dynamics that led to and unfolded from the Glorious Revolution in 1688, the writer saw himself involved in a long-term study of the progress of civilization, culture, and Constitution in England. Despite representing a fundamental change when compared to his primary aspirations as a historian of Great Britain, the new enterprise was not much distant from several reflections Hume had already pursued in other texts. In fact, the undertaking of composing a wide-ranging *History of England* was in harmony with some of his essays written and published the

[300] EHU 12.1–4.

years before. Additionally, the shift of angle did not mean he turned away from his starting ambition of repositioning pivotal arguments of the contemporary Whig and Tory interpretations of history. Oppositely, the *long durée* allowed Hume to revise both parties' interpretations of history by evoking situations and examples from a more distant past and anchored on other sorts of justifications. In that manner, Hume's renewed enterprise allowed him to discuss subjects such as the genesis of contractarianism as well as the origins of the mythological ancient constitution and divine right, topics that would have certainly been addressed from a wholly distinct and more contemporary perspective in a three-volume *History of Great Britain* from 1603 to 1714.

In general lines, Hume's renewed task soon became a narration of the historical process that comprised England's vectorial movement from a crude and primitive social organization to the civilized and polite national form of the modern times. In that enterprise, a *long durée* history of England's Constitution and legal institutions became vital to Hume's objectives. This is why the *History*'s transformed venture demanded him to immediately narrate the events that preceded the Union of the Crowns in 1603, turning back to the Tudors, approaching the dreary Middle Ages, and ending where he considered that lay the beginning of the constitutional history of England: the invasion of Julius Caesar and the Romans in AD 43. A retrospective path proved necessary since one of Hume's decisive hypotheses in the text was that the well-established contemporary freedoms of the English citizens after the end of the Stuart era were an entangled and unobvious outcome of a long-lasting effort by the Commons to obtain power from the Monarchy. Such an assumption disagreed vehemently with the well-known and increasingly popular—at least since the late seventeenth century—Whig argument of a historical fight for power led by the

Commons which had long been assured by a mythological ancient constitution.[301] As a result, Hume's questioning of the existence of an ancient constitution displeased many Whig historians, politicians, and pamphleteers, who accused him of excessive Toryism and, sometimes, worse claims.[302] As we shall see further on, Hume was not a Tory. As a matter of fact, he continued essentially Whiggish throughout the course of his life. Nonetheless, his search for impartiality demanded him to evaluate arguments from both sides and judge documents and testimonies with candor and disarming honesty, even when such an assessment could arouse heated opinions from his audience. Hume's attempt of an impartial view over human affairs also demanded him to distinguish between what he considered historical facts and the interpretation of those facts by past historians.[303]

An in-depth analysis of the *History of England* shows that for Hume the constitutional order from the commercial society officially established in 1714, after George's ascendance to the throne, granted more liberty to the people than ever before. However, explaining such a fact was a serious historical and political challenge. As the text Hume was writing consisted of what Duncan Forbes considered an "establishment history"[304], one that did not question the preeminence of mixed monarchy in the eighteenth century, his work demanded him to attempt to do justice to both sides in the dispute since each stood for a crucial principle of the Constitution as it was. An impartial "establishment history", one that pre-conceives the present as a better place than the past—what Hume concluded Rapin-Thoyras had failed to do—

[301] BUTTERFIELD, Herbert. *The Whig Interpretation of History: Exploring the Science of the Mind*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1965, pp. 41–43.
[302] FORBES, Duncan. *Hume's Philosophical Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 261–263.
[303] SCHMIDT, Claudia M. *David Hume: Reason in History*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, p. 384.
[304] FORBES, Duncan. *Hume's Philosophical Politics*, p. 264.

was to incorporate multiple standpoints and, on the whole, offer a comparative perspective between past and present.[305]

Establishment histories also had to avoid any sort of manichaeism. In that sense, Hume made a huge effort not to portray heroes or villains in his *History of England.* The writer's impartial "moral cognition", as defined by Tamás Damater, required him to try to emulate the perspectives of historical agents, their feelings, and their motives, regardless of their political affiliations.[306] An example is Hume's balance of James I's reign, where lied most of the Whig historiography justification for the increase of power obtained by the Commons.

In that case, when offering an assessment of James I's reign, Hume pondered:

> With decency and courage, he [James I] prepared himself for his end; and he expired on the 27th of March, after a reign over England of twenty-two years and some days; and in the fifty-ninth year of age. His reign over Scotland was almost of equal duration with his life. In all history, it would be difficult to find a reign less illustrious, yet more unspotted and unblemished than that of James in both kingdoms[307].

The passage above is also revealing of Hume's empathetic engagement with the past and its agents. For Hume, it was proper to characterize James I as a decent and courageous man despite the many flaws of his kingdom. And we can suppose he thought such a characterization of the king did not compromise his impartiality. Where the *History of England*'s fiercest detractors and accusers of brazenly obvious partiality

[305] Hume's criticism of Rapin is customarily based on the belief that Rapin lacked eloquence and style. For Hume, Rapin diverted from essential topics to favor performativity, personal dramas, and partiality. For more details on Hume's criticism of Rapin, see SULLINVAN, M.G. *Rapin, Hume, and the Identity of the Historian in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp. 158–160. FORBES, Duncan. *Hume's Philosophical Politics*, p. 264.

[306] DAMATER, Tamás. Morals before Objectivity: On the Relation of Moral Cognition and Moral Philosophy in Hume. In: MURPHY, Kathryn, and TRANINGER, Anita. *The Emergency of Impartiality*. Leiden: Brill, 2014, pp. 335–338.

[307] HE 5.49:121.

saw a flagrant contradiction, Hume envisaged an exciting possibility of empathetic and impartial historical analysis. From his standpoint, readers should be free to respond to the personal tragedy of James because, on a precognitive level, the historian's most essential moral faculty of impartial judgement had already ensured him the necessary critical historical distance to—from the analyses of several sources, testimonies, and other sorts of evidence—compose his skilled, truthful, and authoritative account of the facts.[308]

As a result, Hume's text combines a tremendous amount of sympathy and philosophical elevation to give its tone of impartiality, wit, and sobriety. It also resorts to what Hume considered a concise narrative, in the manner of the ancient historians.[309] Hume's conciseness was directly connected to his desire to offer his readers an amusing history of England. In that case, when he meant his narrative was supposed to be concise, it was because, as he himself acknowledged, it avoided the prolix and tedious style of some of his antecessors.[310] He saw his task as that of providing his audience with an exciting and involving account of the facts, one avoiding unnecessary details and meticulous descriptions. However, such a decision came at a high cost. As suggested before, Hume faced extreme difficulty in fitting his observations on cultural and social history into his main narrative in the text. As F.L. Van Holthoon evaluates, the consequence was that those rich and detailed considerations were relegated mostly to four appendices or, less commonly, to footnotes or the back of the volumes as it happened in some revised editions posterior

[308] PHILLIPS, Mark. *On Historical Distance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013, pp. 69–74. ANKERSMIT, Frank. *Sublime Historical Experience*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005, pp. 98–105. The relationship between impartiality, precognition, and the experience of the past underlying the language used by historians was also considered in Arthur Assis' text about Portuguese historian Alexandre Herculano. See ASSIS, Arthur Alfaix. Alexandre Herculano entre a Parcialidade e a Imparcialidade. *História da Historiografia: Journal of Theory and History of Historiography*, v. 13, n. 32, 2020: 289-329.
[309] HL 1:193.
[310] BAUMSTARK, Moritz. *David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian*, p. 150.

to the 1762 and 1763 ones.[311] Nonetheless, for Hume and other eighteenth-century philosophical historians, the flow of the narrative was a necessary condition to write entertaining history.[312] An enjoyable text selected and threaded certain events, the interesting and instructive ones, leaving behind the facts and connections that, in the historian's evaluation, did not appeal to the audience.

Hume's narrative arrangement was guided by the shared desire in eighteenth-century philosophical historiography to broaden the scope of historical understanding so that other social activities beyond those incorporated by histories written on humanist lines could appear on the text. Even though a lot was left out due to the exhaustive search for a narrative flow mentioned before, the elements incorporated to the *History* fused aspects of a history of civilization and a political history of England. The impression Hume conveys is that historical facts on culture, manners, and learning are fundamental because they help shape and explain the conditions for authority to be exercised.[313] That is why Hume made a huge and successful effort to try out new ways to narrate and assimilated broader perspectives that could allow him a more accurate critique of the sources and judgement of the facts without, however, compromising linear narrative—an age-old authoritative and defining characteristic of history writing. Together with impartiality, care, and judiciousness—symbols of classical tradition—Hume's embodiment of cultural and social history is one of the most remarkable of his features as a historian.

This becomes evident when one takes into consideration the way Hume's text is structured and divided. The Liberty Fund edition chosen for this research is based on Hume and his publisher's first intended division in six volumes. It contains in its

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[311] HOLTHOON, F. L. van. Hume and the End of History. In: SPENCER, Mark G (ed.). *David Hume, Historical Thinker, Historical Writer*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, p. 144.
[312] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, pp. 82–87.
[313] HOLTHOON, F. L. van. Hume and the End of History, p. 147.

totality seventy-one long chapters and four lengthy appendices. Not only did the research and writing labor occupy several years of Hume's life, but the printing and publication of the first edition of each of the volumes, due to their number of pages and density, also took a large portion of time, around eight years, to be completed. The shrewd experiments with several renewed conventions elaborated to solve a few of the problems caused by a monothematic and strictly political-military view of history made of Hume's plan for an abridging narrative of the history of England since its ancient times disruptive, as Robert Henry's was too. In all its course, Hume's text is marked by two perspectives: in the more than seventy narrative chapters, the author does not break with most of the traditional compositional guidelines of a historical text, notably linearity and a balance between instruction and mimesis, but attempts at recalibrating the portrayal of some famous historical figures and their experiences through the exercise of sympathetic reasoning.[314] The disruptiveness of the chapters lies less in their ruptures with linearity, and more in the endeavor to capture the situations and agents' personalities and moral behaviors. In the chapters, very narratological and well-threaded, Hume is in constant search for the emotional responses of characters involved in the political events narrated, trying to grasp the essence of their human nature, a recurring feature of the author's sympathetic imagination.

In any manner, if on the one hand the narrative chapters are considered the least groundbreaking parts of the text, on the other, they enabled Hume to place himself in completely a different place from that of his humanist and erudite predecessors. Together with Robert Henry, William Robertson, and Edward Gibbon,

[314] In *Society and Sentiment*, Mark Phillips argued that "the Greek historians emphasized the idea of history as a strict mimesis", whereas the Romans "gave most weight to the instructive value of history." As Phillips perceived, the emphasis on instruction remained more powerful than the stress on mimesis until the eighteenth century, with the latter remaining almost exclusively restricted to Antiquarian Studies. As a historian of balances, Hume's challenge in his main historical text was to conciliate both poles. See PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, pp. 21–23.

## *Four*
*The Method into Practice*

Hume was one of the agents of the crucial epistemic repositionings that historical writing experimented in the age of the Enlightenment. By the mid-eighteenth century, there was a complex transition—full of recasting, and also ruptures and continuities—from erudite antiquarian inquiries and expertise to a more synthetic and philosophical mode of dealing with the evidence and materials from the past and writing about them.[315] As historians from the Enlightenment referred to wider audiences, they did not share their antecessors' full interest in collecting, compiling, decoding, and unraveling the secrets of original manuscripts, documents, and other types of material objects.[316] For Hume, who greatly trusted published sources, such as memoirs, government documents, and other kinds of historical materials, antiquarian and erudite histories were fully appropriate sources to his work.

Furthermore, as eighteenth-century history was more a branch of rhetoric than a discipline, the historians of the Enlightenment generally directed more attention to innovating on the ways of telling than on explicitly reflecting about method or scholarship. All in all, Hume's letters imply that he had a clear idea of the kind of history he intended to write and the audiences he wanted to target.[317] As a neoclassical historian, one creatively inspired by classical and humanist writers, Hume saw history as a synthetic, pedagogical, and universal genre. In that manner, he wanted his text to be fluid and mimetic, as well as instructive. Like Bolingbroke and other contemporary writers, Hume recognized the aesthetic-pedagogical function of history, and he wanted his readers to learn from reading his accounts of the past.[318] Moreover,

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[315] MOMIGLIANO, Arnaldo. Ancient History and the Antiquarian. In: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes.* n. 13, 1950, pp. 285–288.
[316] MOMIGLIANO, Arnaldo. Ancient History and the Antiquarian, p. 285.
[317] HL 1:210.
[318] WOMERSLEY, D.J. Lord Bolingbroke and Eighteenth-Century Historiography. *The Eighteenth Century,* v. 28, n.3, 1987, pp. 217–219, 223–226. ASSIS, Arthur. Bolingbroke, a Política e os Usos da História, pp. 309–310. HICKS, Philip. "The Spirit of Liberty": Historical Causation and Political Rhetoric in the Age of Hume. In: SPENCER, Mark G (ed.). *David Hume, Historical Thinker, Historical Writer.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, pp. 64–65.

he knew that his audience, part of a commercial and ever more labor-centered society, had been having less and less time to read anything but the essentials although they "reflected seriously on what they read."[319] As histories impacted how their readers comprehended and interpreted the world around them, a good book should be attractive, instructive, and, above all, entertaining. In an age in which knowledge, commerce, and formal work were on the increase, Hume wished his *History of England* soon became a standard for the genre.[320] As Victor Wexler reminds us, Hume was keenly aware of the fact that "when the narrative is smooth and concise, the lessons of history are more easily assimilated."[321]

Nonetheless, concerning the structure of Hume's text, if the chapters contain indications of stylistic conservatism in their composition, the same cannot be said about the four long appendixes scattered throughout the multiple volumes. In the appendices, there is a vast incorporation of open and first-person judgements and balances, bringing to the fore subjects as diverse as ecclesiastical history and the history of religion; the history of constitutions, governments, laws, and customs; the history of learning and of learned man; the history of arts and tastes; the history of commerce and commodities; and brief histories of languages, diets, virtues, and vices. As stated before, Hume was one of the many Western European eighteenth-century authors that challenged the Ciceronian maxim that history ought to be concerned only with high politics and praised the enlargement of the possibilities for historical writing. Understood by Hume as pauses in the linearity of the narrative, the appendices reveal the wide range of possibilities for historical writing in the mid-eighteenth century.

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[319] TOWSEY, Mark. *Reading the Scottish Enlightenment,* p. 2.
[320] POCOCK, J.G.A. *Virtue, Commerce, and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 97–98.
[321] WEXLER, Victor. *David Hume and the History of England*, p. 100.

***Four***
*The Method into Practice*

As Hume stated in the first appendix he wrote, to the reign of James I, in the *History*'s fifth volume:

> It may not be improper, at this period to make a pause: and to take a survey of the state of the kingdom, with regard to government, manners, finances, arms, trade, learning. Where just a notion is not formed of these particulars, history can be a little instructive, and often will not be intelligible. We may safely pronounce, that the English government, at the accession of the Scottish line, was much more arbitrary, than it is at present; the prerogative less limited, the liberties of the subject less accurately defined and secured.[322]

Clearly didactic and instructive, the appendixes are also revealing of how *engagé* the text was. Those were the moments in which Hume made certain assumptions clear and justified them. His interest in becoming a historian was not motivated by a dispassionate view of the past—in fact, history writing is hardly ever a disinterested undertaking—but by curiosity and motivations driven by certain personal beliefs. An example is Hume's explicit conviction that no violent tempers allow a government to establish itself successfully for a long time. In an attempt to emphatically convince the readers of his standpoint, in the first appendix—placed immediately after Chapter Three, in Volume One—where Hume proposes a balance of the Anglo-Saxon governments and manners, he underscored:

> With regard to the manners of the Anglo-Saxons we can say little, but that they were in general a rude, uncultivated people, ignorant of letters, unskilled in mechanical arts, untamed to submission under law and government, addicted to intemperance, riot, and disorder. Their best quality was their military courage, which yet was not supported by discipline of conduct. Their want of fidelity to the prince, or to any trust reposted in them, appears strongly in the history of their later period; and their want of humanity in all their history. Even the Norman historians, notwithstanding the low state of the arts in their own country speak of them as barbarians, when they mention the invasion upon them by the duke of Normandy. The conquest put the people in a situation of receiving slowly

[322] HE 5.App.4:124.

> from abroad, the rudiment of science and cultivation, and of correcting their rough and licentious manners.[323]

Hume's strong but tempered judgements and the emphatic language used in the appendixes of the *History* inform us that his text shares the same challenges imposed in the mid-1750s to political economy, moral philosophy, history, and the novel. The fast changing and increasingly more educated audience demanded some reconceptualizations of central paradigms of those genres.[324] In the case of history, it quickly became understood as more than only a literature of political description. Readers increasingly perceived it as the complex narrative exploration of intimate, sentimental, and everyday experience as well as a description of social and political affairs. [325] Apparently, the challenge was to bring everything together in the diverse, polite, and heightened taste of the eighteenth century, which seems to have overestimated the requirement for an elegant composition.

As stressed before, Hume embarked on the project of writing a *History of England* with the central aim of explaining the origins of the political system he had analyzed in his *Essays*. Nevertheless, he had had little idea of where his historical insights would take him before really engaging with the *History*'s writing. An example is the detailed discussion he pursued in the text about the mythological ancient constitution. The idea of an ancient constitution and the supposed existence of a fundamental contract between the monarchy and the people had been an object of dispute Britain's two main political parties at the time. Averse to faction and zealotry, Hume, who saw himself as a victim of intolerance and lack of sympathetic reasoning, used his *History of England* as a tool to intervene in the fired political debate over the nature of Britain's constitution and started from what he was sure was wrong: the

[323] HE 1:App.1:185.
[324] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, p. 20.
[325] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, p. 21.

conception that James I was the great antagonist of the freedom of the English. Having quickly become the most significant vehicle to Hume's ideas, the *History* defended that the English Constitution was a result of a historical process that dated back to the period of the settlement of an Anglo-Saxon government after the invasion of Julius Caesar and that could be described, in general terms, as a construct founded on the historically situated tensions between authority and liberty, refinement and rusticity, stability and crisis.[326] For Hume, the constitution was more a product of chance than of a conscious plan.

That narrative is however subordinate to Hume's larger amusement for the development of post-medieval European civility, through the inter-related series of cultural, economic, political, and social advancements described in the appendixes. Hume's larger project at work in the *History of England* is the analysis and reflection upon a historical process, the one characterizing the maturation of civilization in England. Such a process was conceived by the writer as a branch of a wider and more encompassing exam of the nature and causes of cultural progress as well as the obstacles to such an amelioration. That point could be illustrated by a close look into a part of Appendix Three, found in the fourth volume of the *History*.

In a passage from the suggested appendix, Hume ponders:

> The party among us, who have distinguished themselves by their adhering to liberty and a popular government, have long indulged their prejudices against the succeeding race of princes, by bestowing unbounded panegyrics on the virtue and wisdom of Elizabeth. They have been so extremely ignorant on the transactions of this reign, as to extol for her a quality, which, of all others, she was the least possessed of; a tender regard for the constitution, and a concern for the liberties and privileges of her people.[327]

[326] GARRIDO, Pedro Paulo Pimenta. Apresentação à edição brasileira. In: HUME, David. *A História da Inglaterra: da Invasão de Júlio César à Revolução de 1688*. São Paulo: UNESP, 2017, pp. V-VII.
[327] HE 3:App.3:354.

# *Four*
*The Method into Practice*

One of the most fruitful and awe-inspiring tensions taking place in Hume's text is a dual perception of history either as instruction or mimesis. In a 1986 article about tensions between mimetic and didactic movements in historiography, Mark Phillips concluded that both in classical and modern times there was a conflict between those who saw history as a loyal and reliable narrative versus the ones who understood it mostly as a literature of instruction.[328] Hume was notably able to conciliate the two tendencies, opting primarily for a focus on sympathetic mimesis in most of the numbered chapters, whereas privileging the pedagogical and instructive character of the historical genres in the appendices. Nonetheless, even throughout the most mimetic of the chapters, significant innovations in the narrative can be identified, especially when the writer is describing not only action, but also experience—ultimately sensorial experience. In those passages, it is clearly noticeable that Hume's sentimental and moral approach to the historical characters is in fact a distinctive characteristic of his historical text. The best example lies Chapter Fifty-Nine, in the description of the moments that preceded Charles I's trial and the scenes in court themselves.

In a specific moment of that chapter, Hume narrates:

> The king, though long detained a prisoner, and now produced as a criminal, sustained, by his magnanimous courage, the majesty of a monarch. With great temper and dignity, he declined the authority of the court, and refused to submit himself to their jurisdiction. He represented, that, having been engaged in treaty with his two houses of parliament, and having finished almost every article, he had expected to be brought to his capital in another manner, and ere this time, to have been restored to his power, dignity, revenue, as well as to his personal liberty[329].

[328] PHILLIPS, Mark Salber. Representation and Argument in Renaissance Historiography. In: **Storia della Storiografia**, n. 10, 1986, pp. 48–53.
[329] HE 5.59:535.

Additionally, a couple of pages afterwards:

> It is confessed, that the king's behaviour during this last scene of his life, does honour to his memory; and that, in all appearances before his judges, he never forgot his part, either as a prince or as a man. Firm and intrepid, he maintained, in each reply, the utmost perspicuity and justness both of thought and expression: Mild and equable, he rose into no passion at that unusual authority, which was assumed over him[330].

All in all, Hume's narrative is constantly trying to incorporate new scenes and angles to the predominantly political narrative practices of the time. His interpretation of human action considers the experiences of historical individuals as closely related to their motives, characters, and circumstances. In the *History*, Hume wanted to relativize the absolute predominance of the political in historical texts. Writing in a moment in which history and politics appeared to be symbiotically parented, Hume had, before turning himself to the project of the *History*, proposed a distinction about the nature of both knowledges. As we shall see in the next sections, his historical text was an instrument of intervention in the political debates of an age, but not through a description solely of politics, and political agents and beliefs.

From a Humean perspective, politics was connected to the sublime, to the imagination, and to the general and universal facts, therefore attempting at circumscribing the qualities, causes, and effects of a whole species of objects, in the same manner of natural philosophy, medicine, and chemistry[331]. History, on the other hand, was a moral reasoning worried about arguments that can sustain the existence of something based on their cause or effect, an activity fully founded on the experience.[332] Like Chronology, Geography, and Astronomy, History must have as its

[330] HE 5.59:537.
[331] EHU 12.31.
[332] EHU 12.30.

main goal turning attention to the “particular matters of fact”, where we can find the explanations to human actions and behaviors.[333]

## 4.2. Descriptions, Frames, and Modes of Historical Explanation

When reading Hume’s *History of England*, one immediately notices the text is primarily an alternation of two of history-writing’s most basic procedures: historical description and explanation. Regarding Hume’s descriptions, they appear most times in the form of historical narrative and less occasionally as historical frames. In that sense, Hume’s text is by and large a lengthy historical narrative that shelters some historical frames every now and then. For that reason, it is correct to affirm that the seventy-one chapters narrate mainly past happenings from diverse natures and key national political events. In contrast, certain parts of those chapters and primarily the four appendices offer a frame of England’s social, cultural, legal, and economic practices across centuries, from the Roman invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688. As emphasized before, it should not be forgotten that Hume’s descriptive enterprise aimed at furnishing its readers with a comprehensive history of the civilization in England.

A careful analysis of the book’s chapters and appendices leads readers to perceive that the volumes contain what Adam Smith’s theory of narrative—densely described in his 1760s Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Letters—called direct and indirect descriptions.[334] As Smith theorized, direct descriptions were customarily used to represent objects themselves, whereas indirect descriptions were preferable to refer to phenomena as perceived and felt by contemporary spectators. In Hume’s *History* and other ancient, humanist, and philosophical history texts, direct descriptions abound and are more observable than indirect ones. What justifies such a fact is the

[333] EHU 12.30.
[334] SMITH, Adam. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, p. 89.

perception that the substantial majority of western histories up to the eighteenth century had been primarily concerned about external events, the "things seen" by witnesses and usually narrated in historians' source materials. External events were predominantly political, such as state revolutions, invasions, occupations, and the concrete actions that generated the genesis, development, and transformation of fundamental aspects of a government. In any way, in terms of direct descriptions, Hume's *History of England*, or even his *History of Great Britain*, did not advance much innovation to the historical genre, and he was acutely conscious of that. His direct descriptions were as straightforward as he wanted them to be, and, as he told Smith in a letter written while composing his *History*, his proposed narrative model was "the concise manner of the ancient historians, than the prolix, tedious style of some modern Compilers."[335] Hume also said to "have inserted no original Papers" and not to have "*enter'd* into no detail of minute, uninteresting facts."[336] As the last section threw into relief, for Hume, excessive minute descriptions and disproportionate discussions of original materials could compromise the philosophical spirit and the flow of narrative he had much "*indulg'd* in all his writings."[337] This had been Clarendon's most serious flaw. Clarendon's style was "prolix and redundant"—it suffocated readers by the length of the periods narrated and the surplus of minimal characterizations.[338]

Nevertheless, Hume's indirect descriptions are worth pursuing in further detail. As that sort of description suited best internal events, the "things unseen"—such as affections, passions, and moral sentiments—indirect descriptions are a distinctive feature of the *History of England* and they challenged several Humean presuppositions about historical knowledge as theorized in the decade before. Hume wisely mobilized them when describing the effects, consequences, or repercussions

[335] HE 1:XII–XIII.
[336] HE 1:XIII.
[337] HE 1:XIII.
[338] HE 6.62:154.

of external events, like a war, a battle, or episodes of State violence, on the body or, most commonly, the minds of the involved subjects. Indirect descriptions allowed sentimental and philosophical historians to exercise their sympathetic spectatorship towards past agents and are easily visible everywhere in Hume's text, especially in the last four chapters of Volume Five.[339] Abridging the period of the English Civil War, from its early beginnings in 1642 to the execution of Charles I, in 1649, chapters fifty-six to fifty-nine intensely recruit that mode of description. A fine example lies in chapter fifty-six, when Hume describes the aftermath of John Hampden's death in 1643.[340]

Hampden became a prominent national figure after fiercely opposing Charles I's tax increase in the first half of the seventeenth century. As Hume affirms, Hampden, "who had a regiment of infantry that day at a distance, joined the horse as a volunteer; and overtaking the royalists on Chalgrove field, entered into the thickest of the battle."[341] Due to his stiff resistance to Charles I's policies, Hampden quickly became an antagonist of the king. In Hume's words, the royalists pleasantly expected a disaster to happen to him, their "capital and much-dreaded enemy."[342] As Hume portrays, the royalists saw their wish come true a couple of days after the battle when Hampden died after being shot in the shoulder "with a brace of bullets."[343] After narrating the battle's events, Hume detailed the effects of Hampden's death on Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex. Essex, who dwelled on the lamentations concerning the death of his army colleague, felt discouraged by the event, and sadly moved from Thame and Aylesbury to settle down in London, where he showed to his friends his "broken and disheartened forces, which a few months before he had led into the field in so flourishing a condition."[344]

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[339] HE 5:56–59:428–548.
[340] HE 5.56:406.
[341] HE 5.56:406.
[342] HE 5.56:406.
[343] HE 5.56:407.
[344] HE 5.56:408.

Hume also recurred Indirect descriptions to enhance and dramatize emblematic scenes in the *History*. A highly characteristic case is the representation of the smaller events that took place moments before, during, and immediately after the execution of Charles I outside the Banqueting House, on Whitehall, in January 1649. According to Hume, the king's opponents chose the place to "display more evidently the triumph of the popular justice over royal majesty."[345] Hume enriched the scene's construction by lively recounting Charles' coming upon the scaffold. Also, in the author's words, the massive number of soldiers around the monarch prevented him from hearing any of the thousands of tremendously excited people on the street.[346] After a detailed description of the subsequent happenings preceding the decapitation, Hume proceeds by relating "a man in a vizor performed the office of the executioner." At the same time, another, "in a like disguise held up to the spectators, the head, streaming with blood, and cried aloud; This is the head of a traitor!".[347] Hume admits that such a momentous and traumatic event generated grief, indignation, and astonishment among the spectators and the entire nation. For Hume, all citizens were "overwhelmed with a flood of sorrow," and the effects of the king's death felt differently by each person.[348] For the writer, "on weaker minds, the effects of these complicated passions were prodigious." Some women, for example, gave birth before expected.[349] At the same time, other citizens fell into convulsions or sank into deep melancholy.[350]

Those descriptions notably counterbalanced firmly established and mainstream views in historiography of specific historical events or agents, like Charles I. For example, as Hume advanced in writing the *History*, he concluded that he was the only unbiased man of no party to compose a history of England. As he said in the early

[345] HE 5.59:540.
[346] HE 5.56:540.
[347] HE 5.56:541.
[348] HE 5.56:541.
[349] HE 5.56:541.
[350] HE 5.56:541.

self-biographical piece *My Own Life,* when the History's first volumes were published, his depictions made him believe he had been the only non-Tory historian to "shed a generous tear for the fate of Charles I."[351] Also, as explicit by the author in 1753 and 1754 letters, he imagined to have been able to write volumes that would be alternately agreeable and disagreeable to both Tories and Whigs.[352]

Hume's indirect descriptions were both a vehicle for sympathetic spectatorship and his claims of impartiality. Since they deeply affected readers and involved them with lively portrays of historical events, indirect descriptions were the ideal means for impartial historians to introduce their judgments of agents and past happenings. In Hume's *History of England*'s particular case, the exercise of impartiality through indirect descriptions commonly took place when he emphasized the lamentations of the unfortunates rather than the blessings of the victors. Sentimental descriptions allowed Hume to exercise sympathy for controversial figures, which he considered an impartial operation. If in the History's Volume Five, his sympathetic depiction of Charles I aroused the rage of Tory readers and historians. His Volume Six's sentimental portrayal of Oliver Cromwell incited the bitterness and furor of Whigs. Hume's Cromwell was a man whose body began to be affected by his anxious mind when he got sick. Weak, the once all-powerful Lord Protector "began to entertain some thoughts of death, and to cast his eye towards that future existence," which the shock of wars and faction hid in distant places of his mind.[353] Hume's Cromwell was also a figure removed from the universe of the marvelous since the exaltation of historical agents always "gives ground for doubt and suspicion."[354] "An eminent personage," his Cromwell was not eloquent and sometimes an overly ambitious leader, as well as a dissimulated person. However, for Hume, who attained at reaching an impartial and

[351] HE 1.*My Own Life*:XXX.
[352] HE 1:XIII.
[353] HE 6.61:106.
[354] HE 6.61:108.

less biased survey of his character, Cromwell was simultaneously a son, a husband, a father, and a friend—a man who despite violently killing a king blinded by fanaticism, had levels of regard to justice and humanity.[355]

Cromwell's and other characters' portraits in the *History of England* reinforce the vitality of indirect descriptions in Hume's narrative. A distinctive feature of ancient historiography, eighteenth-century historians reframed and reshaped the practice of "painting" historical personages and their characters. As Hugh Blair affirmed, operations of that kind gave life, body, and coloring to fact-telling; they embellished the main narrative.[356] On a similar perspective, as Alana Café interestingly notices, painting character portraits was a way Hume found to offer himself and his readers a degree of relaxation and contemplation amid a dense narration of events.[357] Even though portraits were essentially mimetic, when drawn sympathetically as most Scottish historians from the 1700s did, they triggered emotional responses and empathy for historical agents.[358] Especially Hume assumed history was the ideal genre to use visual language and metaphor to depict personal characters and therefore painted several of those portraits throughout his text.[359] He commonly placed those descriptive procedures at the end of a reign or political period, immediately after the narration of a monarch's or a remarkable leader's death.

Hume's character descriptions conferred an additional narrative layer to his text. If his principal narrative of events primarily depicted change over time, the portraits of kings and leaders tried to capture reality from a completely different angle: inward description and careful analytic balance of the evolution of people's personalities and characters throughout their lives. In his attempt to deliver a good

[355] HE 6.61:109–110.
[356] BLAIR, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, pp. 402–404.
[357] CAFÉ, Alana Boa Morte. *História, Interesse e Instrução.* Forthcoming, pp. 12–13.
[358] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, pp. 42–43.
[359] JOST, Jacob Sider. David Hume, History Painter. *ELH*, v. 81, n.1, 2014, pp. 144–145.

story, Hume mixed his direct descriptions of events with sentimental indirect descriptions that brought him closer to his readers. Employing such an operation, the author diversified the historical distances conditioning his text and complexified the relationships between narrative and description in his historical text, something he had not theorized decades before. When we analyze Hume's essays, treatises, and dialogs, and compare them with his *History of England*, it is immediately noticeable that, while writing the *History*, the writer felt the need to complexify his narrative, adding more layers to it.

Sympathetic indirect descriptions in history were one of the ways Hume put his moral judgments into the text. Those situations required him to distance himself from his personal point of view and acknowledge character from a less biased place. Therefore, Hume's moral judgments based themselves upon a capacity to historically contemplate others, their surroundings, and their formative contexts. For him, oppositely to poets, philosophers, and politicians, historians were the real friends of virtue, writers whose reflections lay between the cold abstractions of philosophy and the inaccurate judgments of politicians.[360] Historians placed objects in their authentic standpoints. In that sense, the normative task Hume realized history carried out was offering a comprehensive understanding of perspectives unfamiliar to its readers, enabling them to assess historical agents' diverse and individual reasons for acting.[361] It is essential to emphasize that Hume's indirect descriptions are not opposed to his historical explanation principles. As Jennifer Herdt puts it, Hume's sympathetic hermeneutics supported his enlarged and multi-layered explanation of historical events, especially political ones.[362] Since Hume's historical explanation is highly context-dependent, the questions posed to the past had a wide range of components

[360] HERDT, Jennifer A. Artificial Lives, Providential History, and the Apparent Limits of Sympathetic Understanding. In: SPENCER, Mark G (ed.). *David Hume, Historical Thinker, Historical Writer*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, p.40.
[361] HERDT, Jennifer A. Artificial Lives, Providential History, p. 41.
[362] HERDT, Jennifer A. Artificial Lives, Providential History, pp. 42–47.

and forces in their answers, and Hume's historical text quite often gained personal and inward contours. In Hume's explanatory scheme, the creation of an institution or the increase and decrease of state violence during a reign could easily be attributed to a multiplicity of causes that included the caprice, vanity, humility, or piety of a leader. Hume's historical writings forcefully incorporated a psychological description level and undoubtedly permitted the recognition of his historical reflections as part of Hume's more extensive science of human nature.

This way, Hume's solidly based his psychological descriptions upon the belief that a universal aggregate of psychological laws or principles governed historical agents and their actions. He did not consider the mental content of his historical agents as necessarily exclusive and individual since there was a degree of collectivity and stability in all human minds. Individual peculiarities were described and explained by the different degrees in which certain human sentiments and passions were blended in historical subjects.[363] Typical humean sentimental notions as diverse as ambition, vanity, self-love, avarice, gratitude, generosity, pity, public spirit, and friendship, to name a few, were constant, stable, and essentially the same in all people and always. Be it as it may, it is vital to emphasize that this degree of universality does not make Hume's perspective historically detached since social and individual historical conjectures are the key to explain how much those sentiments were present in each person's mind and to what extent they triggered or influenced their past actions. As Hume suggested in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, there was a remarkable consistency among the actions of men throughout history.[364] Such a stability was visible in all nations and ages and proved that human nature had remained the same for a long time. That allowed readers to understand the inclinations and habits of the Greeks and Romans by an analysis of the temperament of the French

[363] SABINE, George. Hume's Contribution to Historical Method. *The Philosophical Review,* v. 15, n. 1, 1906, pp. 31–32.
[364] EHU 8.1.

and English. Cultural transference existed and humankind had possessed a degree of stability since its early beginnings. In that sense, history's main function was not to communicate something new or strange in the particular of human nature, but to discover its uninterrupted and universal principles by portraying historical individuals in various contexts and situations, furnishing history readers with the base to form their personal observations about what Hume understood as the "regular springs of human actions and behavior".[365]

The relationship between individuality and collectivity is an interesting aspect of the *History*'s descriptive and explanatory enterprise. The text is a history of the civilization in England and described in a complex narrative the development of its social, political, economic, and cultural institutions. Hume's telling of that story presupposed a notion that the achievements of the English people, be it in the formation of their political institutions, commerce, literature, manners, or arts, were products of the reciprocal relations between certain individuals, or groups, and the society around them.[366] For Hume, individuals detached from a totality did not arouse historians' interest. His notion of social solidarity, or social reciprocity, assumed the habits, customs, and personalities of people were made up of the past society accumulated and was transmitted to them by their ancestors. From a typically Humean point of view, the construction of individual consciousness largely depended on the historical constitution of the consciousness of society. Therefore, Hume strongly believed individuals had a natural social inclination and that allowed him to presuppose the increase of arts, pleasures, and commerce in periods of political stability and harmonious discord in society.

On a closing note, it is crucial to remember that Hume's model of historical explanation in the *History of England* follows the premise that historical events ought

[365] EHU 8.1.
[366] SABINE, George. Hume's Contribution to Historical Method, p. 17–18.

to be explained causally from presupposed socio-psychological laws. In other words, Hume based most usual patterns of explanation upon the universal acceptance that there were strict and regular laws ordering the relationships between cause and effect in history. Even though in a few passages of his *History* he anticipated a posterior mode of historical explanation that would emphasize the motives and beliefs of individual historical agents, his predominant way of explaining historical events and their causes adhered to a naturalistic view that there should be homogeneity in all forms of explanation of experience and reality—from the atomic and cellular levels to the social and epochal dimensions. In that sense, cause and effect allegedly possessed symmetric and universal connotations for studies of nature and societies. Moreover, for Hume, cause in history meant the same thing as cause in the doctrine of Newtonianism. Hence, historians ought to conceive the general and regular laws of the causes of the events they depicted in the same way natural philosophers perceived them when conducting their observations and studies.

### 4.3. Emulated Political Debates and Invented Speeches

As argued in section 2.4, the quest for impartiality was the requisite for a good history that ranked first place among most eighteenth-century Western European historians. In that manner, Hume's self-professed moral attitude toward the past was nothing new in the 1700s. However, the way he did it in his *History of England* was original. For Hume, being impartial did not mean never taking sides of one party or another, but rather avoiding following a consistent party line.[367] His impartiality was something like a moral starting point and meant being independent in his judgements of evidence and testimony.[368] As it happened with many other contemporary historians, Hume's mobilizations of the language of impartiality in his historical text are

[367] SKJÖNSBERG, Max. *The Persistence of Party*, p. 174.
[368] For more about the idea of impartiality conceived more as a moral starting point than as an epistemic end, see ASSIS, Arthur Alfaix. Alexandre Herculano entre a Parcialidade e a Imparcialidade.

visible in the character portraits, sympathy, and sentimental remarks made when referring to multiple historical agents. More interestingly, those mobilizations are also widely observed in the emulation of political debates as a mechanism of legitimating the text as impartial. Therefore, regarding the strategies to convince his audience of his impartiality, the emulation of political debates is Hume's *History of England*'s most distinctive feature, especially if compared to Rapin's *Histoire d'Anglaterre*, considered the standard impartial history of England until Hume's text was wholly published in 1762.[369]

Hume's *History*'s emulated debates walked hand in hand with the incorporation of invented speeches into the text. In fact, the usually long and dense imagined discussions between opposite parties in the Parliament or in other political arenas had large portions of invented speeches in them. Even though while Hume was writing his *History of England* the use of both techniques, remarkably widespread in the classical tradition, were a subject of major controversy among contemporary rhetoricians, he opted to bring them into the text. To refrain from compromising the flux of the narrative, Hume avoided presenting the speeches between quotation marks and preferred to address the essence of the arguments in abbreviated form, usually introduced by "that". As Mark Phillips suggested, the objective of the strategy was emphasizing the "argumentative structure of a given position while checking its rhetorical flow."[370] Hume's use of the device abounds in volumes V and VI of the *History*, the ones dealing with the events of a recent past, many of which testified and registered sometimes less than a century before seemed easier to be re-enacted. Since the political memory of the periods the volumes covered was still in dispute, Hume sensed it was crucial to convince his readers from his standpoints and attributing speeches to historical agents offered more vivacity to the narrative.

[369] BAUMSTARK, Moritz. *David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian*, p. 164.
[370] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, p. 63.

An example lies in Chapter Seventy-One, when—while discussing the Prince of Orange's declaration, immediately after deposing James II—Hume tells us:

> In order to redress all these grievances, the prince said, **that** he intended to come over England with an armed force which might protect him from the king's evil counsellors: And that his sole aim was to have a legal and free parliament assembled, who might provide for the safety and liberty of the nation. (…) No one, he added, could entertain such hard thoughts of him as to imagine that he had formed any other design than to procure the full and lasting settlement of religion, liberty, and property.[371]

It is important to emphasize that the many speeches reported in such a way are never referenced in footnotes or endnotes as extracted from documents or sources. Even though Hume's *History* is a result of intense study and source collection and criticism, in many moments—especially in the first two volumes—he opted not to cite explicitly where the information came from. Some scholars attribute this fact to Hume's claim that not filling the text with footnotes or endnotes preserved the clarity of the narrative as well as its conciseness and elegance.[372] As a result, proceeding that way rendered Hume's two first published volumes harsh criticism and got him to introduce a much larger number of references in the subsequent volumes, I to IV, published in the early 1760s. A reasonable conclusion is that the unreferenced invented speeches many times surpassed the socially perceived amount of fiction a historical text was allowed in the second half of the eighteenth century.

In terms of the number of emulated political debates, Hume's *History of England* contains a bit more than half a dozen of them. Most appear in the volumes that depict the existence and preeminence of the Parliament, the political institution that increasingly guaranteed the possibility of parties voicing contradictory points of view in the English political arena. The parliamentary debates presupposed an occasion in

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[371] HE 6.71:510.
[372] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, p. 65.

which neither of the parts involved could subdue the other to such an extent that made the debate unviable.[373] The emulation of debates, a technique Hume adapted from the classical tradition, especially from Thucydides, Livy, and Tacitus, was a weapon of persuasion designed to sway or excite reactions and sentiments in readers. In Hume's case they were meticulously calculated to excite moderation and assure impartiality. Therefore, it must be noted that each of the parties had the same amount of space in the text to expose their opinions. For that reason, it was common for Hume to fantasize or enhance the speeches by inserting invented lines and making up arguments historical agents did not employ. This kind of fiction, that aimed primarily at strengthening the weaker arguments of either party, had the function of warranting both sides isonomy in the debates he was emulating.

A fine example of an isonomic emulated political debate appears in the last volume of the *History*, when Hume reconstructs the Exclusion Crisis that ran from 1679 to 1681. Especially the debate around the Exclusion Bill caught Hume's eye. The Crisis, that led to the formation of two new political parties in England, is introduced by Hume in Chapter Sixty-Eight of the *History*. The emulated debate concerning the arguments for and against the Exclusion Bill are in the same part of the text. Hume starts the summary of the arguments and the emulation of the debate by affirming that the discussions were "carried on with great violence on both sides."[374] A violence he, as a narrator, intended to mitigate by offering a reasonable account of both sides' points of view. In the imagined discussions, Hume accentuated their dialogic character by inserting speeches and asking series of rhetorical questions. In the Exclusion Bill debate, especially the latter mechanism is recurrently employed. Intending to lead his readers to follow the logic of the heated standpoints presented in the Parliament, whenever Hume felt he needed to bypass a polemic conclusion or imply some kind of

[373] BAUMSTARK, Moritz. *David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian*, p. 169.
[374] HE 6.68:388.

opinion towards controversial arguments, he posed rhetorical questions to his audience.[375] The idea was to activate the readership's impartiality in their present and invite readers to co-participate of the writer's judgement, rather than to impose an ideal view of the past.

Hume seems to have thought that the invented speeches and emulated debates consisted of satisfactory ways for him to offer his unbiased view of human affairs. Since it was the historian's task to explain the "secret springs of human behavior" and the essence of human nature while outlining their underlying influence on historical agents, a just and equal view of the facts was fundamental.[376] However, the speeches and debates are also revealing of Hume's belief that history was a type of causal reasoning that demanded inference and consideration of probability. When putting words into the mouths of historical agents, Hume was not fantasizing out of nowhere; he was reasoning from pieces of evidence he found in the present and which enabled him to explain more forcefully and vividly the past he was addressing.[377] In sum, he was regarding the evidence he had at hand and complementing it with a probable causal sequencing, assuming not to be compromising his commitment to truthfulness.[378]

### 4.4. Mitigated Skepticism, Historiographical Impartiality, and Hume's Politics

In the last segment of Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, a part in which Hume re-elaborated some considerations already made in the *Treatise,* he described an important epistemic premise that would guide his attitude towards the materials and testimonies analyzed to compose his *History of England*. He defined that feature as "mitigated skepticism". Attempting to well reconstruct Hume's idea, it is

[375] HE 6.68:388–391.
[376] EHU 3.9.
[377] THN 1.3.4.2.
[378] THN 1.3.9.12.

crucial to follow the entirety of the argument present in the twelfth section of the *Enquiry.* There he points to the existence of a species of skepticism which preceded all study and philosophy. According to him, it was much attributed to René Descartes and others as a "sovereign preservative against error and precipitate judgement", recommending on "universal doubt" about everything.[379] For Hume, who was not totally aligned with what he regarded as Descartes' radical relativism, the Cartesian question—a universal interrogation about absolutely everything existing—was intangible, incurable, and could never take any of us to a state of security.[380] Nonetheless, in spite of criticism to that so-called "excessive skepticism", Hume did not intend to abandon his skeptical roots.[381]

Instead, he aimed at reaching a midterm:

> It must, however, be confessed, that this 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 judgements, and weaning our mind from all those prejudices, which we may have imbibed from education or rash opinion. To begin with clear and self-evident principles, to advance by timorous and sure steps, to review frequently our conclusions, and examine accurately all their consequences; though by these means we shall make both a slow and a short progress in our systems; are the only methods, by which we can ever hope to reach truth, and attain a proper stability and certainty in our determinations[382].

From the passage, we can infer that Hume's conclusion was based on the fact that skeptical methods customarily intend to destroy reason through ratiocination and arguments.[383] As a consequence, the Humean skeptical ideal is that of a restless and unquiet reasonable mind, even with regard to the skepticism to which the spirit is

[379] EHU 12.3.
[380] EHU 12.3.
[381] EHU 12.23.
[382] EHU 12.4.
[383] EHU 12.17.

driven due to absurdity and contradiction.[384] For him, nothing could be more skeptical, fuller of doubt and hesitation, than skepticism itself.[385] What Hume proposed in that section of the *Enquiry* was a recast of the original Pyrrhonian ideal, to which he had been fully devoted in his early days. He described that moderate form of skepticism as a "mitigated skepticism."[386] It was now mitigated because, even though it had been derived from Pyrrho, it managed to correct the Pyrrhonian faults by applying common sense, reflection, and verisimilitude to experience.[387] In fact, in such a reworking of the initial Pyrrhonian ideal lay part of the theoretical background for the justification of the so-called impartial eye that guided a later part of Hume's intellectual development and the writings of that more mature phase, including his *History of England.*

Therefore, Hume's soothe skepticism, as elaborated in the *Enquiry*, intended to combat dogmatical and excessively affirmative opinions, inspire modesty and reserve, and diminish fond opinions toward oneself, as well as stimulating the ebb of people's prejudice against their antagonists.[388] Hume also defended that the skeptical and impartial observer should always have heightened awareness of the excesses of abstractions and transcendences, as our imagination is naturally attracted to them.[389] In that manner, as judgement cannot be suspended, a correct assessment of reality and experience must observe a method that reinforces the comparative operation of verisimilitude to ordinary life and quotidian experience of reality.[390] In that case, it is easy to understand why the professed search for an impartial eye towards human nature and actions is an imperative commonplace in Hume's *History of England.* From the early 1750s onwards, it is not rare to find everywhere in Hume's letters, prefaces, and his short self-biographical text, *My Own Life,* references to his certainty of having

[384] EHU 12.20.
[385] EHU 12.20.
[386] EHU 12.24.
[387] EHU 12.24
[388] EHU 12.23–24.
[389] EHU 12.25.
[390] EHU 12.29.

written a skeptical, impartial, and distanced account of the history of England. In *My Own Life*, for example, he emphasized:

> I was, I own, sanguine in my expectation of the success of this work. I thought I was the only historian, that had at once neglected present power, interest, authority, and the cry of popular prejudices; and as the subject was suited to every capacity, I expected proportional applause."[391]

In addition, in a 1754 letter to his friend and eminent public man, William Mure of Caldwell, Hume said: "The first Quality of an Historian is to be true and impartial; the next is to be interesting. If you do not say that I have done both Parties Justice; and if Mrs. Mure, be not sorry for poor King Charles, I shall burn my papers, and return to Philosophy."[392] As Mark Phillips noted, in this same letter, Hume was sure he had been able to write for both genres, masculine and feminine, by distancing himself from events and exercising compassion for historical figures mostly understood as vile and evil.[393] For Phillips, Hume was in fact inventive in simultaneously aiming at the female readers, relocating the editorial place of history as a genre, by disputing an audience up until then restricted to the novels.[394] The letter also stands as an evidence of Hume's previously affirmed conception that impartiality did not mean the suspension of idiosyncratic judgements, and that Humean impartiality was, as a matter of fact, as mitigated as his skepticism. In that case, it worked as a mechanism to legitimate his own judgements and opinions, which he believed to have obtained from a mild disposition, control of temper, moderation of passions, and a sober constraint on the faculties that could compromise his management of historical distance.[395]

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[391] HE 1.XXX.
[392] HL 1:210.
[393] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, p. 60.
[394] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, p. 62. Hume had already referred to the suitability of history to women in his essay *Of the Study of History*, see E 563–564.
[395] DAMATER, Tamas. Morals before Objectivity: On the Relation of Moral Cognition and Moral Philosophy in Hume, pp. 338–342.

## *Four*
*The Method into Practice*

If we intend to deepen our knowledge and complexify the reflection on Hume's mitigated skepticism and historiographical impartiality as derivative of it, we must return to his *Treatise of Human Nature.* Overall, a significant part of Hume's earliest reflections on the mechanism of impartiality—later reframed in the *Enquiry*—lay in Book 3 of his *Treatise*, in which he draws the contour of the ideas of selfishness and partiality. [396] In the first sections of *Treatise* 3.2., Hume defends that someone's observation and attention is never equally distributed towards all the objects with which one's mind must deal. For him, certain parts or elements are more appealing to the observer and therefore receive more of his or her attention. Among those parts or elements the mind has to deal with lay a very important object or entity—the self.[397] Also, side by side with the self, there are other things which demand very strong attention from a person—their relatives, acquaintances, or physical objects they possess.[398] Thus, toward those familiar things, one tends to be more partial, and the exercise of impartiality becomes extremely tough. For Hume, partiality is an unequal affection, something that influences not only our behavior and conduct in society, but also our ideas of vice and virtue.[399]

From Hume's standpoint, partiality is a feature intrinsic to our human nature. Consequently, it is vital to become conscious of such a fact and attempt to constrain so natural a tendency by opening to other points of view, in an act of unselfishness and avoidant of individualism.[400] In other words, an honest exercise of sympathy.[401] As Hume was one of the exponents of a theory of moral judgement that focuses on the spectator rather than the agent, from his point of view, it was pivotal to search for impartiality, an element of our natural and human sense of moral equity. For him and

[396] THN 3.2.2.1–9.
[397] THN 3.2.2.8.
[398] THN 3.2.2.8.
[399] THN 3.2.2.8.
[400] THN 3.2.2.9.
[401] THN 3.2.2.9.

some of his colleagues, Adam Smith for instance, the philosopher and the historian are spectators.[402] By definition, spectators are not primarily involved in the dynamics of the actions and situations observed, and that fact ought to make them distant and able to inhibit the emotional ravishment to which the observed parts—the direct witnesses and, mainly, the agents—are susceptible to.[403] The worst that can happen to the spectator is to be partial towards one or some of the agents, especially if consanguinity, relativity, or friendship are at stake. Then, it becomes vital to perceive that any kind of theory of morality founded on the judgement of the spectator must fight a central problem: partiality. This is why, as previously suggested in section 2.4, in Hume's philosophy, impartiality is an antidote to both partiality and indifference—it is the sort of mechanism that allows an attitude of sympathetic engagement.

Throughout Hume's *History of England,* his mobilizations of the language of impartiality reinforce the idea that the notion did not mean neutrality. Oppositely, it was a certain quality of judgement, one that was oriented by laying aside personal preferences and privileging the arguments at stake, to justify, before an audience, the quality of the observations made by the historian in his text. As Arthur Assis emphasized, it is amidst the ambivalence, instability, and resignifications of the use of the language of impartiality in time that scholars are sure to find a series of tensions which allow for the understanding of the meaningful relationships of distancing and approximation established by writers of histories, in their present time, with a remembered past.[404] For example, when Hume is describing events or themes in a recent or distant past which he seems to understand as less important to the present or features that he, in his formative experience became indifferent to, the limits of impartiality can barely be questioned. Nevertheless, when he touches on sensitive topics or moments that he, due to his present-time perceptions, valued as negative or

[402] HOLTHOON, F. L. van. Hume and the End of History, p. 143.
[403] HOLTHOON, F. L. van. Hume and the End of History, p. 143.
[404] ASSIS, Arthur Alfaix. Alexandre Herculano Entre a Parcialidade e a Imparcialidade, p. 322.

affirmative, the boundaries between impartiality and partiality become more fluid. In the *History of England*'s specific case, such a fluidness is clearly noticeable in the volumes covering the Stuarts and the Tudors, as Hume's historical approach is intrinsically connected to his political one. In those segments it is impossible to dissociate Hume, the political agent, from the historian.

As a matter of fact, Hume's political identity was a factor used by his many detractors to raise doubts about his impartiality in the *History of England*. Hume's 1748 essay, *Of the Protestant Succession*, points to an understanding of Hume as a skeptical Whig.[405] Actually, the 1748 essay seems to be a building block of his 1741 essay, *Of the Parties of Great Britain*, in which Hume implies an understanding of Whiggism from a utilitarian place instead of that of the contract theory—so far, the base of the Whig mainstream historical interpretation after the events of 1688, and in the subsequent turn to the eighteenth century.[406] Thus, it is plausible to affirm that such a position enabled him to guess he was exercising his professed impartiality since he recognized the success of the Glorious Revolution at the same time he did not support the Whig thesis that James II had broken the ancient contract between the monarchy and the Englishmen.[407] For Hume, some decades prior to the revolution, the House of the Commons committed an aggression and ought to be criticized for it. As Victor Wexler reminds us, by doing so, Hume was able "to extol the peaceful achievement of the parliamentarians of 1688 and still decry their innovations of the 1620's and the 1640's."[408]

Furthermore, Hume's essay *Of the Coalition of Parties* anticipates two important features of the *History of England.* On the one hand, the mingling of his

[405] E 502–511.
[406] E 64–72.
[407] HE 6.70:449–450. According to Hume, Charles James II since the beginning of his reign knew that "the laws of England were sufficient to make him as great a monarch as he could wish: and he was determined to never depart from them."
[408] WEXLER, Victor. *David Hume and the History of England*, p. 29.

historical and political thinking, and, on the other, the linguistic strategy with which he intended to convince his audience of his arguments.[409] Concerning Hume's language, it largely depended on detailed discussion of the evidence available and strict disclosure of how interpretations were built. In terms of his historical and political views, Hume, unlike Hobbes, who saw social obligation from the bias of believing in the necessity to recur to authoritarian forms of government, trusted that the members of a civil society had the inherent capacity of cultivating sympathy for the institutions that ensured the public interest.[410] For Hume, the longer a government performed to guarantee freedom, prosperity, and self-realization to its subjects, the more acquiescence it could demand.[411] Hume was overall an anti-authoritarian who endorsed the Glorious Revolution in the same way the vast majority of the Whigs did.[412] For him, the revolution meant a turnaround in British history since it "assured the most entire system of liberty that was ever known amongst mankind."[413] Such a fact historically justified the insurrection against James II; however, it did not excuse the reckless actions taken by the Commons against the early Stuarts.[414]

Combined with impartiality, moderation is a defining epistemic starting point of most mid-century British philosophical historians' works. In Hume's case, the moderate attitude toward the past is what allowed him to go back to the chronicles and past histories of Great Britain, especially the most Rapinesque ones, to reevaluate the

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[409] E 493–501.
[410] E 464.
[411] E 465.
[412] Perhaps Hume's most explicit assessment of the Glorious Revolution as more advantageous than not is the Chapter Seventy-One, "The revolution forms a new epoch in the constitution; and was probably attended with consequences more advantageous to the people, than barely freeing them from an exceptionable administration". HE 6.71:531.
[413] HE 6.71:531.
[414] Most of Hume's considerations on the recklessness of the commons against the early Stuarts appear in the fifth volume of the history. The volume describes a series of plots and conspiracies against both kings, especially James I. Hume was disapproving of conspiracies in general as he made clear in Chapter Fifty-Six, in which he narrated the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, that he called the "Gunpowder Conspiracy." For him the event stood as the "widest departure from morals, and most steady attachment to religious prejudices. See HE 5.54:25–27.

views on some historical agents, particularly the ones involved in key political decisions. Most of Hume's attempts during those retroactive enterprises seem to have been motivated by an attempt to escape from certain mid-century political stereotypes of past agents and an ongoing Whig manichaeism. *Of the Coalition of Parties* ratifies Hume's rejection of contractarianism and the belief that the ideological battle between Whigs and Tories could be justified by morals and ethics and solved by a moderate observation of past events. Already anticipated in his political *Essays*, Hume's historical interpretation of polarized partisanship concluded that in the same manner the later Stuarts got their comeuppance, the early ones should have been exempted from theirs. It is also important to emphasize that throughout his attempts of legitimizing his *History of England* as impartial, Hume seems to have had Rapin-Thoryas as his antithesis. As attacking the impartiality of someone else's work seemed to be an efficient strategy to degrade it and legitimize one's own, raising doubt and suspicion is what Hume did to discredit Whig foil.

Hume's political view prevented him from believing that either Whigs or Tories had full ownership of historical truth. In that manner, at the same time he was not a monarchist in the Tory sense of the term, he openly disliked the possibility of a republic in England.[415] He believed in the peaceful coexistence of the Parliament and monarchs, in a balance of power that ensured liberty and authority. Hume's self-affirmed historiographical impartiality also forbade him to believe in either heroes or villains, and he spent a great deal of his *History of England* reaffirming this point.[416] As aforementioned, Hume was master of historical figures' profiles, and one of the best examples that illustrates that narrative procedure in Hume's *History* is the sequence of Chapters Thirty-Six to Forty-Four, all depicting the reigns of Mary Tudor

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[416] In *The History of England*, it was common for Hume to place at the end of a reign a section commenting on the death and the character of a leader, especially monarchs. Those sections abound with moderate judgments of their personalities and attitudes.

and her half-sister Elizabeth. If we consider that, when reduced to it most elementary aspects, the relationship a historian establishes with the past he wishes to address can only be affirmative or negative, in the Humean interpretation of history, the Elizabethan era is, overall, positively valued.[417] It is a moment that Hume and, surprisingly, other Whig historians overall addressed affirmatively, based on the judgement that the queen had singular talents for government which had been founded on her temper and capacity.[418] Mary, on the other hand, was the leading figure of a historical moment negatively valued by Hume since her reign was revealing of a deleterious history of partisanship and faction that should teach contemporary society about the sort of past and practices that ought not to be repeated in the present.

It must be remarked that, despite his Whiggish overtones, Hume relativized Elizabeth's adulation by contemporary Whig historians. Elizabeth served as the vehicle for him to base his interpretation of the later Stuart period. As Wexler says, he "wanted to show that it was unhistorical to adulate one arbitrary princess while condemning the Stuart princes who emulated her maxims."[419] In that sense, the balanced recounting of the reign of Elizabeth allowed Hume to exercise his impartiality and try to convince his audience of him being an independent historian, one who unmasks insincerity and affectation and offers his audience a new, and supposedly, non-tendentious view of the facts.

Consequently, regarding Elizabeth, Hume said:

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[417] ASSIS, Arthur Alfaix. Alexandre Herculano Entre a Parcialidade e a Imparcialidade, p. 292. Hume's relationship with the Elizabethan era is complex. At the same time, he condemned certain aspects of her tyranny, all in all, the Elizabethan era was positive for decisive aspects of the historical process he is considering in the *History.* See HE 4.38:48–52. For the improvements in learning during the Elizabethan era, see HE 4.App.3:385–386.

[418] BUTTERFIELD, Herbert. *The Whig Interpretation of History,* pp. 46–47.

[419] WEXLER, Victor. *David Hume and the History of England*, p. 59.

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> The fame of this princess, though it has surmounted the prejudices both of faction and bigotry, yet lies still exposed to another prejudice, which is more durable because more natural, and which, according to the different views in which we survey her, is capable either of exalting beyond measure, or diminishing the luster of her character[420].

Despite several negative valuations in the *History*, especially in the volumes covering the Antiquity and the Middle Ages, epochs in which Hume considered England to be less civilized and more rustic, it can be defended that the *History of England* is mostly set in an affirmative mode. This is why, from Hume's standpoint, most of the solutions for the constitutional and social problems of England had already been drafted or implemented in many moments in the past, but later suppressed by the precarity of excessive authority, lack of prudence, zealotry, and intolerance. Consequently, Hume's *History* intended to convince its readers that the best future is not the open and unlived of brand-new experiences in stock. For him, the ideal future was based on a re-signification and re-enactment of past moments, adapting them to the modern times. Interesting lessons resided especially in the moments in which English citizens had been able to enjoy freedom and political stability. For him, contemporary England would be better off in an encounter of past and present, enabled by a true and disinterested knowledge of the country's own history. Under this perspective, Hume's historical practice was intimately connected to essential extra-textual and extra-cognitive ends, teaching societies how the present and the future ought to be, always based on what they had already been or failed to be.

Hume seems to be constantly trying to ally sensitivity and cognitive construction throughout his *History of England*, and to show us that we cannot transcend those boundaries, as they are innate limits of our behavior. In that sense, it must be noted that his historiographical impartiality did not approach something that could be compared to a full-blown objectivity, a perspective that is totally detached from biases

[420] HE 4.44:352.

and ideological inclinations. In fact, the ideal of a full objectivity is something alien to Hume's epistemology and historiographical practice. What Hume proposes, on the other hand, is that philosophers, historians, and other scientists of human nature be better of constraining their own personal biases and individual perspectives to incorporate others' and take them into account in their analyses. For him, it is the assumption of the existence of a common, or general, point of view that allows the exercise of impartial judgement.[421]

Hume's linguistic mobilizations of the language of impartiality are also connected to the role of moral cognition in the methodology of his moral philosophy.[422] As we can imply from Damater, from Hume's standpoint, moral cognition is part of the process of making moral judgements, something that belongs into the realms of imagination and sensing.[423] It also serves the purposes of our interaction and sociability, all the time modulating our everyday social, cultural, and politico-ideological perspectives.[424] Moral cognition is, at some level, what makes us function as pieces of a society and a definitive factor of partiality in our judgements, preferences, and ideologies. This is why, for Hume, the exercise of impartiality tends to be linked to a sober constraint on moral cognition, founded on moral sentiments and sympathy.[425] Hume's historical method, with its pronounced focus on impartiality, is all the time reflecting upon situations, either considering the behaviors of the historical agents involved in the past or accounting for how those behaviors could have influenced or affected third agents inserted in the context of an event. In short, Hume's self-claimed

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[421] STEWART, Carole. The Moral Point of View. *Philosophy (Royal Institute of Philosophy)*, v. 51, n. 196, 1976, p. 177. Hume's reflections about the common, or general, point of view are more visible in THN 3.3.1. (See especially THN 3.3.1.9–10, THN 3.3.9.26). Rachel Cohon also made important considerations on the subject, see COHON, Rachel. The Common Point of View in Hume's ethics. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, v. 57, n. 4, pp. 848–850.
[422] DEMETER, Tamás. Morals Before Objectivity, pp. 339-342.
[423] DEMETER, Tamás. Morals Before Objectivity, p. 343.
[424] DEMETER, Tamás. Morals Before Objectivity, p. 344.
[425] DEMETER, Tamás. Morals Before Objectivity, p. 342.

impartial eye tries to conciliate causal reasoning, the external observation of behaviors, and methodological empathy. This is especially visible in moments in the *History* in which he analyzes how behaviors that could be considered rationally unfair or inappropriate were in fact based on good intentions and agents' honest desire to do the best.

The conclusion is that Hume's mightily strive for impartiality does not close the door to subjective and idiosyncratic judgements, particularly about politics, from the historian's side. In fact, all throughout his *History of England*, he seems to be arguing that our exercise of sympathy is historically contingent.[426] He also constantly illustrates how humans have the propensity to favor those close to them not only in time and space, but also ideologically. Hume's *History* is groundbreaking and original in many aspects, particularly in the political message it carries, connected to the encouragement of civism and tolerance among citizens. In the *History,* most of his supposedly impartial judgements are made from a political perspective. Furthermore, in the many passages of the text in which he considers some epochs better than others, he is doing so mainly because, from his standpoint, the politics of the "better" times allowed citizens to enjoy more freedom, culture, learning, and progress of manners.[427]

[426] He had already suggested that in THN 3.3.1.10.

[427] A fine example of that lies in HE 6.71:530 in which Hume supposes: "Governments too steady and uniform, as they are seldom free, so are they, in the judgment of some, attended with another sensible inconvenience: They abate the active powers of men, depress courage, invention, and genius; and produce an universal lethargy in the people."

# CHAPTER FIVE

## THE METHOD THEORIZED: HUME'S EARLY REFLECTIONS ON HISTORY AND THEIR ECHOES IN *THE HISTORY OF ENGLAND*

Much of the scholarship on Hume's writings has often assumed a uniformity in the author's ideas as if his so-called "system of thought" was always cohesive and coherently developed throughout the years. Even though an intertextual analysis of Hume's works informs us of the existence of an evolutionary continuity between writings—especially between the *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40) and the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (published in 1748 as *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding*), the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), and the *Dissertation on the Passions* (1757), other works are a direct product either of new reasonings or a refashioning and reframing of ideas contained in previous writings. Examples are Hume's mid-life analyses of commercial society and political economy, present in the *Essays, Moral and Political* (1741–48) and the *Political Discourses* (1752). Both advance—in Addisonian conversational essay-like style—original ideas and an embryonic sort of political science. Moreover, at this point in his career, Hume began drafting the historical narrative of the Stuart period to which he first referred as *The History of Great Britain* which later became his *The History of England*, as described in Chapters Three and Four.

Hume's self-affirmed desire to become an eminent man of letters explains the vast array of subjects he approached. Conventionally, the eighteenth-century man of letters was a multi-tasked person: a writer versed in many subjects who, typically, at a mature point of his career, wrote history. Those authors hardly ever had their authority questioned and largely impacted their audiences. A dignified genre that taught society about its past, roots, and how it came to its present state, history possessed the power of earning or tarnishing a writer's reputation. In Hume's case, his *History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688* made him extraordinarily

well-to-do and famous. In any manner, the fact is that history had long informed Hume's writings before the publication of the *History* and, by the 1740s and early 1750s, his considerations about the subject became denser and more consistent. Before the *History of England*, Hume's reflections on history appeared pulverized among many textual genres that were not necessarily histories. Nonetheless, they appraised historical evidence, built historical explanations, and circumscribed the viability of historical arguments.

Hume kick-started his early reflections on history by the late 1730s, with the composition and publication of the *Treatise.* He presented the *Treatise*'s philosophical observations mainly as a conjectural history of morals elaborated through a consideration of the reliability of historical evidence and the essence of historical narration. In the *Treatise,* Hume suggests history was more than a storehouse of preceding facts. From carefully reading the *Treatise*'s Book Three, for example, one quickly concludes that Hume understood history as an activity that articulated a meticulous analysis of past sources into a concerted narrative of previous events. In sum, it could be said that the *Treatise* is the early beginning of Hume's historicization of his philosophical arguments. Taking this into consideration, the present chapter has the intention of mapping Hume's most important reflections on elements of historical methodology in multiple texts before the *History of England,* while commenting on their echoes in his main history text.

This way, the focus of Chapter Five lies on Hume's textual developments between 1739 and 1754, when he pursued diverse literary activities. Thus, the chapter is based on the examination of parts of the *Treatise,* some of Hume's *Essays,* and parts of the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding.* The selection sheds light on critical features of Hume's historical method, which he put into practice in the composition of the *History of England*, in addition to other issues connected to his general conception of history. The main objective is to trace the considerable

intertextuality and overlapping between the *Treatise*, the *Essays*, the first *Enquiry*, and *The History of England*, especially in terms of treatment of evidence, vocabulary, and explanatory structure, mainly of general causes.

Section 5.1 refers to moments in Hume's writings in which he justified the importance of history, demonstrating how he explained his engagement with it before writing the *History of England*. Consequently, in agreement with Christopher Berry and several other scholars, it is defended that the explanations and exemplifications of Hume's favorite themes at the beginning of his career—more notably his views of human nature and other topics surrounding it—were highly contextual and history-dependent. This section thus proceeds on the assumption that there was plenty of history in Hume's thought before the *History of England.* It was written after a careful analysis of specific parts of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* and his *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding*. In 5.1, it is claimed that his ideas of distance, love of truth, and his recognition of the aesthetic-pedagogical function of historical examples are interesting doors for readers to assess the centrality of historical reasoning to Hume's thought.

Then, expanding the scope of the arguments contained in 5.1, in section 5.2 the focus lies mainly on Hume's concept of imagination as elaborated by him in the *Treatise of Human Nature*. Inspired by the reflections of Timothy Costelloe and Douglas Long on the subject, section 5.2 defends that Hume's idea of imagination radically affected his conception of history and therefore his historical narrative. To do so, 5.2 recurrently touches on sensitive parts of the *Treatise*, such as Hume's circumscription of the distinct roles of memory and imagination in shaping history and historiography. In the sequence, section 5.2 argues that Hume's reflections on imagination allow for a better understanding of the author's process of assessment of the facts of past through operations of verisimilitude to present experience. Finally,

section 5.2 argues that, for Hume, the credibility and truthfulness of history was largely dependent on the efficacy of those comparative operations.

Differently, the objective of section 5.3 is to the reflect on what Hume considered to be the nature of historical events and how an evaluation of the general causes conditioning their existence was pivotal for his historical arguments. 5.3 presupposes that history of events had been the dominant mode in the historiographical tradition since Antiquity and far into the eighteenth-century. Nevertheless, Hume's assessment of what constituted a historical event represented an advancement in comparison to his contemporaries. Finally, section 5.3 concludes that the search for the universality of causes was pivotal to Hume's explanatory enterprise in the *Essays* and in *The History of England.*

Ending the Chapter, Section 5.4 shows how Hume's general causes were put into action both in his *Essays* and in the *History of England.* This way, 5.4 argues that Hume's historical arguments are full of comparisons between past and present and that the search for a universality of causes through time is the main factor driving those analogies. Additionally, as section 5.4 suggests, in several moments in his texts, Hume implies that it is a consistent causal analysis what defines out comprehension of historical evidence and, therefore, of historical facts. The conclusion is that causes were so important to Hume that they are the principal object of his historical inquiries in some of the *Essays* and in the historical process outlined throughout the *History of England*.

## 5.1. Distance, Love of Truth, and Justifications for Historiography

One of the first indications of Hume's undeniable and far-reaching interest in history and of the relevance of history for his broader philosophical thinking lay in the second book of the *Treatise*. In *Treatise* 2.3.8, he referred to the importance of distance over the will and direct passions. For Hume, when thinking about time and events, we

should reflect upon three phenomena: the why reason distance weakens the passions, the reason why distance in time has a more significant effect than a distance in space, and the reason why distance in the past has an even more substantial impact than the distance in the future.[428] He importantly concludes that the understanding of those three reasons largely depends on whether they are considered together with their reversals: that a great distance increases our esteem and admiration for an object, that a distance in time increases our esteem and admiration more than distance in space, and that distance in the past increases our esteem and admiration much more than the distance in the future.[429] Hume justifies his points by asserting that when a very distant object presents itself to our imagination, our reflection of the interposed distance between it and us enlarges our soul, feeding us with satisfaction and pleasure.[430]

He also suggests that although significant distances "produce an admiration of the distant object, a distance in time has a more considerable effect than that in space."[431] For example, ancient busts and inscriptions seem more attractive than Japanese tables from the present time. In addition, we regard ancient Greeks and Romans with more reverence than modern Chinese or Persians, bestowing the fact that it costs us less to make a voyage and testimony their character, government, learning, and manners than it costs us to be adequately and fully informed of the same aspects from the inhabitants of ancient Greece or Rome. As previously suggested, Hume defended in the *Treatise* that it belonged to human nature the perception that something distant and remote—especially in time—brings less opposition to us than something near and present. Little or no resistance and contradiction enlighten our passions and allow for an invigoration of the soul and a feeling of elevation. In Hume's words, "whatever supports and fills the passions is agreeable to us; as on the contrary,

[428] THN 2.3.8.1.
[429] THN 2.3.8.1.
[430] THN 2.3.8.1.
[431] THN 2.3.8.1.

what weakens and enfeebles them is uneasy. As opposition has the first effect, and facility the second, no wonder the mind, in certain dispositions, desires the former, and is averse to the latter."[432] In such a case, if it belongs to human nature, the described feeling of reverence and awe towards the past, especially the distant one, reflects the natural human inclination to historical inquiries.

It is then easy to understand why the relationship between the past and human passions became a recurring topic in Hume's *History of England*. In the *History*, numerous similar considerations, contained in various passages, illustrated what Hume had already suggested in the *Treatise*: that the past is a relevant stimulus to enlighten the human beings' most fundamental passions, especially the ancient past. For example, in *History* 5.45, Hume described the intense and continuous rediscovery of Roman and Greek authors by the English society in the early years of James I's reign. James succeeded Elizabeth, and Hume understood the revival of Greek and Roman literature in his reign as a *long durée* direct consequence of the Elizabethan era, since Elizabeth highly valued the importance of antiquity and its cultural products. According to Hume, Elizabeth read, translated, and admired ancient authors.[433] Moreover, the queen comprehended the centrality of ancient culture and arts to the continuous civilization process of her nation. Hume argued that "in England, the love of freedom, which, unless checked, flourishes extremely in all liberal natures, acquired new force, and was regulated by more enlarged views, suitably to that cultivated understanding, which became, every day, more common, among men of birth and education."[434] He continued by saying that "a familiar acquaintance with the precious remains of antiquity excited in every generous breast a passion for a limited constitution and begat an emulation of those manly virtues, which the Greek and

[432] THN 2.3.8.6.
[433] HE 4.App.3:385.
[434] HE 5.45:18.

Roman authors, by such animating examples, as well as pathetic expressions, recommend to us."[435]

However, not only a sense of awe towards the past led humans to retrospective inquiries. Another essential factor that guided humans' inherent interest in studying history was curiosity, or love of truth, a disposition Hume theorized and described in detail in the third part of the second book of the *Treatise*. In the *Treatise* 2.3.10, Hume described love of truth as the first and most fundamental source of our backward-looking inquiries.[436] In that point of his text, Hume considered the types of truth that existed and the fact that they did not mean anything by themselves. For him, our discoveries must have some relevance, and utility to us; they have to lead us to discovering some kind of truth. Thus, another factor justifying anyone's engagement with reading and studying history is the fact that the past is a place where humans seek and find universal and general truths about their behavior and condition.

In Hume's words:

> The truth we discover must also be of some importance. 'Tis easy to multiply algebraical problems to infinity, nor is there any end in the discovery of the proportions of conic sections; tho' few mathematicians take any pleasure in these researches, but turn their thoughts to what is more useful and important. Now the question is, after what manner this utility and importance operate upon us? The difficulty on this head arises from hence, that many philosophers have consum'd their time, have destroy'd their health, and neglected their fortune, in the search of such truths, as they esteem'd important and useful to the world, tho' it appear'd from their whole conduct and behaviour, that they were not endow'd with any share of public spirit, nor had any concern for the interests of mankind.

Hume saw the truth found in history as applicable because it taught readers about their individual and social nature. Consequently, history was the best remedy against partisan, sectarian, and inadequate appropriations of past events by certain

[435] HE 5.45:18–19.
[436] THN 2.3.10.4.

political groups and parties to explain and justify their positions. He understood historical truth as the solid basis for criticizing and unmasking fake political discourse. He also saw history as a vehicle to oppose hostile or indifferent views of modern institutions.

For Hume, history was a continuous aggregate of experiences for the understanding of which the present time always stood in a better position than the past. The study of the past offered tools for present-day readers to guide their actions, emulate good examples, and avoid bad ones. Many of Hume's texts contain passages that justify and reinforce such a belief. For instance, in the *Treatise* 3.2.10, he concluded that the examination of history and the investigation of the most diverse polities of the world with their revolutions, conquests, ascensions, declines, the way their governments had been established, and power transmitted through generations allowed the reader to understand the authentic and original qualities of human nature.[437] From Hume's point of view, the study of history was the only one able to confirm the reasonings of true philosophy since it was a sort of inquiry that taught citizens to see political controversies as usually impossible to solve and wholly subordinate to the interests of certain untamed human passions. History was fundamental to the intellectual background of any "impartial enquirer," one "who adopts no party in political controversies and will be satisfied with nothing but sound reason and philosophy."[438] In that manner, Hume's history was undoubtedly *magistra vitae* and followed the maxim traditionally (and wrongly) attributed to Dionysius of Halicarnassus' maxim—repeated several times in the early eighteenth century, notably by Bolingbroke—, according to which history was "philosophy teaching through examples".[439] Hume wrote history inspired by a humanist perception that

[437] THN 3.2.10
[438] THN 3.2.10
[439] ASSIS, Arthur Alfaix. Bolingbroke, a Política e os Usos da História. *História da Historiografia: International Journal of Theory and History of Historiography*, v. 11, n. 28, 2018, p. 311. About the mistake in attributing such a maxim to Dionysius, see footnote 5 in Assis.

history and its examples could strengthen personal virtue.[440] He then operated through comparison between past and present, building a contrastive structure of historical understanding. Hume's historical texts, especially the *History,* customarily measured the distance between the now and then, using the past as the main substrate for present lessons.[441]

*History* 6.71 is the last chapter of Hume's dense book and brings along the best Humean judgment on the role of historical truth in the civic education of a nation. As universally agreed, and suggested before, the main objective of Hume's colossal *History of England* is to call the citizens' attention to the importance of learning about their nation's constitutional genesis and development in detail to avoid faction and division. Therefore, after a protracted balance of the constitutional struggle kept between the crown and the Englishmen over centuries and the importance of understanding both sides' contextualized motives, passions, and behaviors, Hume argued:

> It is no wonder, that these events have long, by the representations of faction, been extremely clouded and obscured. No man has yet arisen, who has payed an entire regard to truth, and has dared to expose her, without covering or disguise to the eyes of the prejudiced public. Even that party among us, which boasts of the highest regard to liberty, has not possessed sufficient liberty of thought in this particular; nor has been able to decide impartially of their own merit compared with that of their antagonists. More noble perhaps in their ends, and highly beneficial to mankind; they must also be allowed to have often been less justifiable in the means, and in many of their enterprizes to have payed more regard to political than moral considerations[442].

Hume's historical writing analyzed reason in its path and activity throughout time, rather than as an independent spiritual or metaphysical principle. Hume's reason was empirical and visible, especially when its elements, connections, causes, and

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[440] BERRY, Christopher J. Hume on Rationality in History and Social Life, p. 237.
[441] PHILLIPS, Mark. *On Historical Distance*, p. 69.
[442] HE 6.71:532–533.

effects were historicized. Consequently, one of his central attempts was to make a method-oriented register of usage and justification of that faculty by humans in the continuum of their existences. His contributions to the human sciences, especially to the contextualizing approach of history—as he saw it—are best described as an attempt to apprehend the internal motivations of subjects concerning external situations. For him, history was where one could genuinely exercise a sympathetic and impartial eye over the actions, behaviors, and passions of others—real people, not the ones imagined by novelists.

Hume had organized those ideas short before the publication of the first volume of the *History of England*, in his short essay, *Of the Study of History*,[443] in the early 1750s. The text was directed especially to his female readers, whom Hume considered, in a somehow condescending manner—at least from today's perspective—to have been much too involved with the reading of novels as their main source of knowledge about the past. For him, women engaged extraordinarily little with historical reading. Thus, intending to capture female attention and convince women of the superiority of history over romances, Hume stated:

> In reality, what more agreeable entertainment to the mind, than to be transported into the remotest ages of the world, and to observe human society, in its infancy, making the first faint essays towards the arts and sciences; to see the policy of the government, and the civility of conversation refining by degrees, and everything which is ornamental to human life, advancing towards its perfection? To remark the rise, progress, declension, and final extinction of the most flourishing empires; the virtues which contributed to their greatness, and the vices which drew on their ruin? In short, to see all the human race, from the beginning of time, pass, as it were, in review before us, appearing in their true colours, without any of those disguises which, during their lifetime, so much perplexed the judgement of the beholders. What spectacle can be imagined to be so magnificent, so various, so interesting?[444]

[443] E 563–568.
[444] E 307.

The quote is revealing of some central aspects of Hume's engagement with the enterprise of history writing. In his conception, historical knowledge was dual. On the one hand, it was perceived as an agreeable amusement that functions as a vehicle to the origins of human society and its path towards an alleged natural and expected evolution, visible in the development not only of the arts and the sciences but also in other contexts; on the other, history was regarded as a part of knowledge that belonged exclusively to the "man of letters" since it opened doors to several different writing and studying possibilities, proving itself to be a substrate to a myriad of other sciences. According to Hume, "a man acquainted with history may, in some respects, be said to have lived from the beginning of the world, and to have been making continual additions to his stock of knowledge in every century."[445] It is also essential to draw attention to the fact that Hume saw history as a subject promoting virtue. For him, we encountered images and models of virtuous moral inspiration in history, with its exemplary, useful, and informational functions to the present societies. This is observable in his portrayal of some admired, exemplary, and distant in time and place figures, from which I opted to highlight King Alfred the Great. Even though character portraits were pursued in detail in section 4.2., I want to briefly follow Hume's depiction of Alfred in the lines below.

Alfred was described in the first hundred pages of Hume's text, in the *History* 1.2., as a prince who "gave very early marks of those great virtues and shining talents."[446] Hume praised the king of the West and Anglo-Saxons for characteristics he believed all of us should possess, such as moderation, flexibility, and justice. Firstly, Alfred acknowledged erudition's usefulness at an incredibly early moment of his life. Thus, what distinguished him from his brothers—and even his father—was his interest in the recital of Saxon poems, much adored by his mother. He also enjoyed the poems' surrounding literature, which Hume argued allowed him to expand the noble and

[445] E 308.
[446] HE 1.2:67.

elevated sentiments he received from nature.[447] Alfred, the youngest and favorite son of Ethelwolf of Wessex, came to power after the reigns and deaths of his three older brothers: Ethelbald, Ethelbert, and Ethered. If one considers the fact that Hume tended to see most of the Britons and Anglo-Saxons as superstitious, religious, and intolerant rude Barbarians, the elongated segment dedicated to the description of Alfred is revealing of some of Hume's central beliefs and pivotal convictions that, with an impartial eye, virtuous examples can be found in anyone, anywhere. Even in the habits of war, when it was inevitable and utile to be violent, Hume, through a citation of Asser—Welsh monk, chronist, and Bishop of Sherborne—declared Alfred "knew how to reconcile the most enterprising spirit with the coolest moderation; the most obstinate perseverance with the easiest flexibility; the most severe justice with the greatest lenity; the greatest vigour in commanding with the most perfect affability of deportment."[448] Immediately after, Hume added, in a personal and very Humean tone, Alfred likewise carried the "highest capacity and inclination for science, with the most shining talents for action."[449]

Hume's *History*—and the selected examples it offers—is based on a critical interpretation of texts and documents. Such an enterprise aimed to unveil the intentions of other historians, compilers, chroniclers, and witnesses while assessing their historical situations. Like other eighteenth-century philosophical historians, Hume sought in his individual example illustrations of spirit and geniuses of an age. The spirits and geniuses, as necessary connective bonds, revealed opinions, passions, and prejudices from certain historical moments. They gave a unity of signification to actions and events that, if considered individually, would mean very little or nothing. It is vital to reinforce that Hume wrote without the boundaries of the critical methods and professional perspective of the century after. The possibility of writing as a dilettante gentleman-historian, an independent man of letters, instead of an academic

[447] HE 1.2:75.
[448] HE 1.2:75.
[449] HE 1.2:75.

researcher with professional bonds and obligations, enabled Hume to write and pursue his *History* with more freedom and less rigidity.

### 5.2. Historical Imagination, Factual Reality, and the Credibility of History

The relationship between history and imagination constitutes an indispensable part of Hume's approach to historical writing since according to him it is in our imagination that humans set the surroundings—or the contexts—that adjoin our experiences of the world. In other words, it is by employing our imagination that we make sense of all the experiences we have. Growing older, we accumulate more impressions, perceptions, and experiences and memorize them. Our memory is responsible for stocking those impressions, whereas our imagination allows us to compare a present impression, perception, or experience to a previous one.[450] However, history is seldom about individual perceptions and experiences. Instead, history is the activity that places the individual on a broader, social, scope and enlarges personal perceptions of reality, creating complex descriptions of social interactions customarily assembled in a narrative flow that requires an extraordinary degree of imagination to be composed. In a Humean sense, historical imagination is the ability to intersect and coherently organize in a time-oriented narrative a significant number of perceptions of the world and the contexts—set of events and structures—neighboring and conditioning them.

Besides, it is in our imagination and through operations of verisimilitude, contiguity, contrariety, and causality, that we conceive all objects, including historical ones. It is also in our imagination, and through historical thinking, that we forge those objects' identities, geneses, and courses of development. The result is an artificially constructed narrative that, when shared with others, naturally impacts their imaginations and helps them form individual interpretations of their own experiences

[450] THN 1.1.3.1–4.

and realities.[451] Undoubtedly, in Hume's conception, history was about experience and remembrance; paradoxically, it was neither experienced nor remembered.[452] It was not experienced for an obvious reason—it is impossible to go back in the past and fully experience a historical moment. In addition, it was not remembered because, in Hume's philosophical system, human memory was responsible exclusively for copying and repeating initial impressions, aiming to retain as much as possible of its strength and vivacity, resulting in facts that inspire a specific category of true beliefs, usually formed from the memory of something directly experienced by the person remembering it.[453]

History's foundation lay in the imagination, like the fables, novels, and other genres of fictional literature. It is then based upon the association, transposition, and transformation of ideas derived from individual impressions of reality. Also, as it happened with fables and novels, those ideas had to be assembled as a narrative to constitute a history.[454] Such a fact allows for a common Humean comparison between the crafts of both historians and poets. Nevertheless, unlike novelists, historians were obliged to submit those ideas to a strict verification process of their verisimilitude to authentic human experiences. In other words, the constitutive elements of history had to fit a methodic system designed to check their causal plausibility, internal coherence, truthfulness, and potential of reduction to explanatory degrees of universality. Humean history primarily explained the general causal interconnection of past experiences that constituted historical characters, events, and structures.

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[451] THN 1.2.6.9; THN 1.3.1.1.

[452] LONG, Douglas. Hume's Historiographical Imagination. In.: SPENCER, Mark G. (ed.). *David Hume: Historical Thinker, Historical Writer*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, p. 202.

[453] COSTELLOE, Timothy. Fact and fiction: Memory and Imagination in Hume's Approach to History and Literature. In.: SPENCER, Mark G. (ed.). *David Hume: Historical Thinker, Historical Writer*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, pp. 181–182.

[454] THN 1.1.4.1–3.

Hume also considered history a rhetorical art, as previously mentioned. Since the plausibility of the associations of ideas and perceptions that composed a history was a product of imagination, the ideal Humean historian had to be skillful enough to materialize that imagined construct in the form of impartial, judicious, truthful, entertaining, and pedagogical texts. Hume's more historically oriented *Essay*s and his muti-layered *History of England*, writings in which we find most of his historiography, are texts that undertake a casual, ironic, and intimate style. Such a fact proves that Hume's main accomplishment as a historian was his remarkable ability to relocate some classical conventions of the genre, mingling them with the eighteenth-century renewed demands for history. Undoubtedly, Hume's historical texts' linear narrative, elevated diction, the pairing of speeches, analyses on relevant occasions, retrospective summations of characters, and customarily annalistic structure led his present-day readers to identify them with history quickly. Whereas Hume's sensibility to moral and political matters, his ironic critique of religion, sympathetic reasoning, moderate tone, and intimate imagination made for a recognition of his histories as texts from his present-day instead of writings from antiquity. Hume's reduction of part of the traditional distance between author and reader intended to approach his readers and arouse their inclination to look at the past more sympathetically, leading them to a less fanatical and superstitious life in the present.

*Treatise* 2.1.11.5 attests that Hume understood our imaginative capacities as a construct based on sympathy, which was a capability for human cognition. It meant our sense of political, social, and historical orientation in the world was a product of our cognitive ability to look around us, recognize humans as similar to each other, and penetrate their sentiments, easily and delightfully embracing them.[455] From Hume's standpoint, people are different; however, despite their differences, the perception that we have a similar human nature makes room for sympathetic identification. The fundamental qualities of the *self* are made up of a broad range of causes, being the

[455] THN 2.1.11.5.

sentiments of others towards ourselves and ours towards them one of those causes.[456] Other similarities, for example, manners, habits, character, nationality, and language spoken, facilitate sympathetic identification.[457] For Hume, the stronger the relationship between an object and a person is, the more efficiently the imagination will shift from simple perception to understanding, enabling us to develop a larger comprehension of objects and ourselves better.[458] In Hume's conception, there is no difference between how people arrive at an image of their or others' present-time nations and how they imagine other nations more distant in time and space. The faculties involved in imagining those objects—near or distant—were the same. However, an accurate, involving, lively, and truthful historical narrative can bring the objects of historical inquiry—characters, events, and structures—closer to the reader, promoting a more sympathetic engagement with them. That is why Hume's eloquent narrative in some of his *Essays*, and especially in his *History of England*, evoked detailed and sentimental images of the past. As Douglas Long suggested, for Hume, the mirror of history was the mirror of sympathy. History was the archetypical sympathetic social science— "the most direct beneficiary of the operations of sympathetic imagination."[459]

*Treatise* 2.3.7 and 2.3.8 are also very revealing of Hume's engagement with history. In *Treatise* 2.3.7.1 and 2.3.7.2, Hume suggested there was an easy reason why humans conceived everything contiguous to them in time and space with "force and vivacity."[460] In contrast, distant objects became fainter and obscure. For him, objects near in time and space had a smaller intermediate space between the observer and themselves, which made it easier for the imagination to run through intermediary objects and recognize them as accurate and existing.[461] That made history a complex

[456] TAYLOR, Jacqueline. *Reflecting Subjects: Passion, Sympathy, and Society in Hume's Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 18.
[457] THN 2.1.11.5.
[458] THN 2.1.11.5.
[459] LONG, Douglas. Hume's Historiographical Imagination, p. 208.
[460] THN 2.3.7.1.
[461] THN 2.3.7.2.

enterprise, not an impossible one. For Hume, historians had to be aware that the nearer past was easier to write about and more directly enjoyable to his readers. Therefore, when writing about distant pasts, historians had to carefully move through the intermediate space between the present time and the distant past, amusingly describing and narrating the order and causal connection of the intermediary objects they went through. As he suggested in *Treatise* 2.3.9 and 2.3.12, our imagination has a natural difficulty running along the past, so the ascent into the past is challenging and demanding. Nonetheless, it invigorates the soul and enlightens our passions when pursued appropriately. In that sense, historical writing was a task for people with intellectual disposition and propensity to overcome the natural barriers to the human mind. It was the intellectual exercise of "running against the natural stream of thoughts and conceptions"[462] to unveil human situations in various spatial and time contexts.

It is important to stress that Hume's approach to the subjects of history and historical writing constitutes an indispensable branch of his approach to moral matters. Even though history is the primary focus of some of the *Essays* discussed in this thesis and the *History of England*, the whole of Hume's moral philosophy is deeply historically rooted. His philosophical work contains a fundamental historical dimension and can scarcely be read apart from it. The historical past furnished Hume with a wide array of examples for many of his groundbreaking philosophical assertions. For example, Hume's dissection of the understanding and the passions in books 1 and 2 of the *Treatise*, respectively, counts on investigating the nature, genesis, and development of those passions in the human mind and their manifestations in human actions throughout time. In addition, his approach to history and historical writing was ultimately skeptical and experimental, and the past served as a laboratory for the experimentations of his science of human nature. Hume's premise was that all human minds reflected one another even when separated in space and time. His ambitious project of a "science of man" demanded him to map the perceptions, passions, and

[462] THN 2.3.8.9.

ideas in human minds considering their spatial and temporal contexts. Those contexts—historical situations and events—define his understanding of the products (cultural, political, social, institutional, or economic) human imagination created.

Hume considered his engagement with history twofold, as he affirmed in part three of his *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding*. This way, to provide credible histories, historical inquiry had necessarily to proceed from the dual perspective of analyzing, describing, and framing not only the horizons of the historical agents—who act in certain conjectures and follow their present-day biases, beliefs, and intentions—but also from perspectives of witnesses, chroniclers, compilers, and other historians. For him, credible histories based their understanding and explanations upon the different historical situations of the people that lived, witnessed, and later described an event. In general, historians could only perform their duty because they wrote from a posterior vantage point and this privileged position in time is a mandatory condition for the historian's central task of encountering and narrating the necessary connections between events and their general causes.

In that sense, Hume believed his prime objective as a historian was to find the principles of connections between perceptions, ideas, manners, and actions of subjects in the past. For him, history was viable since there was an underlying thread of connection, a relating principle, running through events and uniting them. Hume's selection of events presupposed the existence of a discoverable unit he assumed existed among the situations and states of societies across time. In EHU 3.1. and 8.1., Hume implied that through reasoning—philosophical and historical—it was possible to discover and depict the "necessary connections" that led to an unveiling of sets of causal regularities that operated universally and had an "equal influence on all mankind."[463]

[463] EHU 3.1.

For him:

> The same motives always produce the same actions: The same events follow from the same causes. Ambition, avarice, self-love, vanity, friendship, generosity, public spirit: these passions, mixed in various degrees, and distributed through society, have been, from the beginning of the world, and still are, the source of all the actions and enterprises, which have ever been observed among mankind. Would you know the sentiments, inclinations, and course of life of the Greeks and Romans? Study well the temper and actions of the French and English: You cannot be much mistaken in transferring to the former most of the observations which you have made with regard to the latter. Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature, by showing men in all varieties of circumstances and situations, and furnishing us with materials from which we may form our observations and become acquainted with the regular springs of human action and behaviour.[464]

A specialist in the reception of David Hume's *History* in the pre-revolutionary France, Laurence Bongie affirmed that despite Hume's initial unsuccess with the *Treatise*, his *Essays*, and the *Enquiries*, his philosophical works contributed to add success to his historical work in the eye of the eighteenth-century reader.[465] As, in the public opinion's general conception, history had to be philosophically reasoned, only multi-tasked writers, versed in other literatures, especially the science of politics, were deemed capable of composing a good historical text. Specifically, the writing of a nation's history, in the eighteenth century, was expected to be entertaining and complete, presenting the largest possible variety contexts and socio-political situations in throughout time.

Although across the twentieth century, and still nowadays, most of Hume's wide recognition has been due to his philosophical works, his canonization movement, in the second half of the eighteenth century, did not follow the same logic. At the time of

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[464] EHU 8.1.

[465] BONGIE, Laurence. *David Hume, Prophet of the Counter-Revolution*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.

his death, a great deal of the British and continental European large reading public admired Hume more for his milestone and career-defining *History of England* than for his philosophical works. Even though aspects related to the *History*'s canonization, monumentalization, and successive de-canonization and de-monumentalization were referred to in Chapter Two, it ought to be pointed out that the *History* is a book that has never been unanimous in its public reception and especially in its relationship with editors and the editorial market. On the contrary, Hume's historical thinking kept on being a target of controversy and disagreement. Such an affirmation introduces and reinforces the central thesis of this chapter that despite the Hume's attitude of methodological care, judicious judgment of sources and the historical evidence they contained, as well as the adoption of the language of politeness in his narration of historical events, he kept in constant tension and negotiation with his own beliefs, ideals, and valuation of the past. In any way, it is important to emphasize that the existing and evident friction among those perspectives neither invalidates the historical text nor compromises the also professed conviction of search for a pedagogical truth in the remembered past. Oppositely, those conflicts and tensions are revealing of the multiple possibilities which allow for a historical text to operate before their contemporary and posterior audiences.

### 5.3. Historical Events and Their General Causes

Published in 1742, Hume's essay *Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences* contains a complex and potent epistemological reflection on historical knowledge and the thematic unit most commonly associated with it: the event.[466] More than a mere consideration, some passages of the text are a draft of elements of a historical method based on a theory of the event. This theory is consistent enough to secure a ranking of social facts that would allow the author to make philosophical generalizations. The basis for Hume's argument, as well as for the existence of history

[466] E 111–113.

as a whole, is a distinction between chance and causes and both their influence over human affairs. Hume assumes that several incidents in human life owe a lot to chance, while others proceed from causes, even though not all people can observe that.[467] For Hume, if all those happenings were a result of chance, then there would be no reason for their retroactive investigation. Nevertheless, when a writer is interested in the past and skillfully manages to uncover an incident's specific and stable causes, he observes what escapes the ordinary, non-historically minded people.[468] From Hume's standpoint, the differentiation between chance and causes depends upon individuals' capacities to think historically; that is, to consider diverse happenings in the complexity of their spatial and temporal extensions, attributing chains of causes to them, thus making them the primary object of history. Also, for Hume, chance is not so much the complete unpredictability of events as the observer's impotence to unveil deep-seated causal relationships.

From the Antiquity to the eighteenth century, event history was without a doubt the dominant mode in the Western historiographical tradition.[469] As seen in the previous chapter, while Hume was writing his event-centered history, William Robertson and Robert Henry, among others, were doing the same. However, the novelty of Hume's argument, when compared to Henry's and Robertson's, lay in carefully considering what sorts of events were likely to be understood as historical due to the identifiability and relevance of their long and intricate chains, or networks, of causation. In short, Hume's event cannot be detached from its complex web of causes, as are the causes themselves that allow an event's understanding as such. For those reasons, Humean history consists of a meticulous investigation of the causes conditioning events. For Hume, the activity of historians is on its most basic

[467] E 112.
[468] E 113.
[469] ASSIS, Arthur Alfaix. *Plural Pasts*, section 1.

level identifying the unobvious connection between an effect—the event—and the conjectures from which it spread. This is primarily done by inference, not perception.

Hume knew his method for identifying a historical event was somewhat subjective since it heavily relied on an observer's judgment and ability to infer whether chance or cause governed an incident. However, to help individuals apply such a distinction, he proposed a general rule that ambitioned to help distinguish between one and another:

> If I were to assign any general rule to help us in applying this distinction, it would be the following, *What depends upon a few persons is, in a great measure, to be ascribed to chance, or secret and unknown causes: What arises from a great number, may often be accounted for by determinate and known causes.*[470]

Hume's chief interest in history is linked to the aim of disclosing the universality of causes while reasonably speculating upon many events from various natures. In the *Political Discourses* and the *History of England*, Hume writes about commerce, politics, manners, arts, and religion, among other subjects. Regardless of the subject matter, he is constantly searching for commonalities in the events' causes and the circumstances and conjectures that condition their existence. Hume's main goal while making history is to reunite different particulars in a sole and general axiom. In such an operation, his historical eye observes from the above, meticulously pursuing causes that display biases or general tendencies. To do so, Hume proceeds on the epistemological assumption that even ethereal elements, such as affections and passions—about which he had extensively reflected in his *Treatise of Human Nature*—can generate trends that, no matter how small, might prevail and cast a balance entirely to a side, creating or modifying an event. In the passage above, for example, Hume's theorem points to sets of causes that beget a specific inclination at a particular

[470] E 112.

time among certain people. Although some may escape the contagion, most certainly will not and will thus have their actions governed by such causes.[471] As Hume says, causes operating in a "multitude" are always "of a grosser and stubborn nature, less subject to accidents, and less influenced by whim and private fancy, than those which operate on a few only."[472]

Accordingly, Hume's causes perform socially. According to his theory, events are singled out as historical precisely because they resonate in social groups and alter the course of their political, economic, and social institutions. These events also reverberate societies' cultural products, manners, and sentiments. That leads to the conclusion that despite a mid-eighteenth-century biographical impulse, as seen in Oliver Goldsmith's *The Life of Richard Nest* (1762) or the anonymous *Letters to a Young Nobleman* (1763), Hume's reflections on historical writing and his primary historical texts strenuously resist being identified as biographical. Hume's histories flirt with biographies only in its most metonymic passages: when philosophy teaches by selected individual or private social examples. For Hume, nevertheless, minor incidents in a particular person's health, education, or fortune could not be reduced to general maxims or observations; those incidents, hence, do not belong to the realm of real history. From Hume's viewpoint, the most relevant aspects of societies' histories are the general changes that lead them to dramatic and profound transformations.

Hume's historical events and their social, political, cultural, and economic components presuppose a cause-and-effect explanatory key, heavily relying on a detailed examination of their geneses and courses of development. In addition, events, according to him, are relational and can be decomposed into smaller ones with diverse temporalities, interplays of forces, overlapping connections, encounters, and blockages. Nevertheless, they are only considered events worth describing in the

[471] E 112.
[472] E 113.

present because they allow for an understanding of a current conjuncture, context, or point of interest. An attentive reader unambiguously identifies that mode of explanation in Hume's *Essays* and his *History of England*. Anticipating a nineteenth-century trend, Hume's historical thinking generally dealt with the progress, less commonly the decline, of elements arranged in threaded networks of causation to create a larger unit of historical understanding that the historian perceives as valuable to the comprehension of his present. Like other eighteenth-century historically-minded thinkers, conceptions of historical evolution and social solidarity profoundly influenced Hume.[473] For him, societies were organic units subject to continuous development; their parts existed in such a relationship that shifts in one of them affected the whole.[474]

Several events Hume described in the *History of England* had already been outlined and interpreted in his *Essays*, especially the political ones, written mainly between 1741 and 1748. Examples are the origins of government and constitution; the independency of Parliament; the constitution of the parties of Great Britain; the advent of the Absolute Monarchy and the Republic; and the rise and progress of arts and sciences. The *Essays* studied the conditions and causes of several features at different levels while trying to connect them to the broader science of politics. For example, the rise and progress of the arts and sciences symbolize the extended temporal nature of some of Hume's historical events and the intricacy of its internal causal dynamics. As one of Hume's big blocks of historical understanding, the progress of the arts and sciences as a historical event mattered to the writer since it is a significant causal component in societies' multi-layered processes of civilization. As aforementioned, in his 1742 essay, Hume addresses the criteria for defining what occurrences and incidents characterize or not historical events. He also advises how

[473] SABINE, George. Hume's Contribution to Historical Method, p. 17.
[474] SABINE, George. Hume's Contribution to Historical Method, p. 18.

to infer the events' networks of causation reasonably. Besides, one should not neglect that the essay is a fine example of how to generalize from causes.

As Hume says:

> The question, therefore, concerning the rise and progress of the arts and sciences, is not altogether a question concerning the taste, genius, and spirit of a few, but concerning those of a whole people; and may, therefore, be accounted for, in some measure, by general causes and principles.[475]

Hume is convinced that there are good reasons for nations to be polite and learned at particular times and argues that the issue is susceptible to historical reasoning. He then proceeds by making four generalizations about the subject. The premises reveal the synergy among political, cultural, economic, religious, and social causes while setting the broader framework within which a historian should recount the history of an event, in this case, the progress of the arts and sciences. First, from a cultural and political perspective, the arts and sciences cannot surge among people who do not live under free governments.[476] Since no laws or political institutions secure those societies, they cannot protect themselves from the injustice of those governors; therefore, one should not suppose that refinements in arts and sciences will ever appear in barbarian monarchies.[477]

His second observation is that politeness and learning continuously thrive in independent states interconnected by commerce and policy.[478] For him, not only is the emulation that emerges among those states a cause of improvement, but also a way to restrict the appearance of absolute governments. Hume infers from European and world history that small states usually change into commonwealths, while extended

[475] E 114.
[476] E 270.
[477] E 117, E 271.
[478] E 119.

states soon become absolute and quickly accustomed to tyranny. The third remark, which takes a geographical and geopolitical angle, is that although the proper environments for the rise and progress of the arts and sciences are free and small states, people may transplant them into any other place and form of government.[479] He continues by saying that a republic is most encouraging to the expansion of the sciences and a civilized monarchy to that of polite arts. His fourth and last consideration is that when the arts and sciences come to perfection in a state, from that instant onwards, they necessarily decline and hardly ever resurge in that nation.[480] Hume ponders that even though this maxim may be contrary to reason, Antiquity proves that models do not last forever. One learns from the rise and progress of the arts and sciences that Hume resolved to set the foundations of his reflections on the interweaving of causes from diverse natures more than his contemporaries did.

An example lies in the *History*'s volume III when Hume attributes the voyages of Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama as the cause for a series of improvements in many European nations, even those not directly affected by the Spanish and Portuguese navigation enterprises. According to Hume, expanding commerce and maritime exploration increased industry and the arts.[481] It also reorganized the internal economy and culture of certain states by promoting a dissipation of some of the nobles' fortunes, who "acquired expensive pleasures" while simultaneously allowing "men of an inferior rank" to capture "a share in the landed property."[482] The latter also benefited from the voyages due to the creation of "a considerable property of new kind, in stock, commodities, art, credit, and correspondence."[483] The voyages are a fine example of a recurrent Humean suggestion: that passions and actions from a few can awaken the brilliance (what

[479] E 119.
[480] E 120–123.
[481] HE 3.26:80.
[482] HE 3.26:80.
[483] HE 3.26:80.

Hume refers to as the “genius”) of a nation, inspire the young and wield general principles. Hume intended to establish a strong link between societies’ more traditional political and economic histories and their cultural roots and development. He was worried about the limits of historical explanation, exemplification, and narration wholly based on traditional political elements (i.e., wars, interests of power, and the ambition of governors). Accordingly, he took a step forward to enlarge the domains of the political, including other cultural variables. In that sense, Hume did more than has been stated by current scholarship on his thought. He did enlarge the scope of causal relations that explain history and its events, but he also expanded the notion and sphere of politics.

Hume’s description of the early Renaissance is revealing of other aspects of his engagement with history. For him, the Renaissance, with its multiple and varied causes and consequences, shared with the maritime expansion the role of one of the most extraordinary events of the fifteenth century. Hume’s Renaissance started in 1453 when the Turks took Constantinople. From his point of view, its inevitable and most profound consequence was the Greeks’ taking shelter in Italy, fleeing from the barbarous Turks,[484] bringing to the Italian peninsula some remains of learning still preserved, their “admirable language, a tincture of their science," and a characteristic and "refined taste in poetry and eloquence.” [485] That, combined with a local contemporary revival of the Latin language, the interest in the study of Antiquity and the esteem for literature permitted the propagation of a new European culture. The “spirit of the age” was also dramatically affected by the art of printing, gunpowder invention, and general human affairs. Commerce, the arts, science, government,

[484] HE 3.26:81.
[485] HE 3.26:81.

police, and cultivation evolved. For Hume, those events and their mixed causes were the main reason for beginning the "most agreeable part of the modern annals."[486]

In addition, the mid-fifteenth century also meant a turnover for historical research, a moment in which:

> "...certainty has a place in all the considerable, and even most of the minute parts of historical narration; a great variety of events preserved by printing, give the author the power of selecting, as well as adorning, the facts, which he relates; and as each incident has a reference to our present manners and situation, instructive lessons occur every moment during the course of narration. Whoever carries his anxious researches into preceding periods is moved by a curiosity, liberal indeed and commendable; not by any necessity for acquiring knowledge of public affairs, or the arts of civil government."[487]

Hume had a peculiar way of professing his methodological premises. Unlike Robertson, for example, he did not open his *History of England* with meta-explanatory remarks. Nevertheless, by attentively reading the text, one finds several passages in which the author explains his method's central aspects. In the opening pages of the *History's* volume II, Hume starts Henry III's kingdom's narrative with an observation about the possibility of finding general and constant causes in sciences, history included. For Hume, "most sciences, in proportion as they encrease and improve, invent methods by which they facilitate their reasonings; and employing general theorems, are enabled to comprehend in a few propositions a great number of inferences and conclusions."[488] Like other sciences, history, "being a collection of facts which are multiplying without end, is obliged to adopt such arts of abridgment, to retain the more material events, and to drop all the minute circumstances, which are only interesting during the time, or to the persons engaged in the transactions." [489]

[486] HE 3.26:82.
[487] HE 3.26:82.
[488] HE 2.12:4.
[489] HE 2.12:4.

Throughout most of his narrative, Hume was not obsessed with details, especially when the function of an event — and the smaller ones it contained — was a contribution to the larger narrative of the book: the perfection of England's political constitution from the imperfect forms of barbarity to the advent of its seventeenth-century mixed government. As we shall see in the next section, minute and meticulous descriptions were left to the appendices or sections that looked like them at the end of the chapters.

In any manner, Henry III's fifty-six years of kingdom are one of those moments in history filled with "frivolous events," prone to the composition of a "tedious narrative;"[490] especially if it followed previous conventions of the genre to describe more the character and attitudes of governors and less the forms and practices of their rulings. A prince full of "caprices and weaknesses," Henry had himself very little to offer to posterity.[491] So, his permanence in power as a historical phenomenon should be analyzed from the causal connection between politics and a more comprehensive range of elements, such as commerce, manners, natural conjectures, and religion. Offhand, history and religion offer, for Hume, the most critical causal connection in action during Henry III's reign. As he says: "the chief reason why protestant writers have been so anxious to spread out the incidents of this reign is in order to expose the rapacity, ambition, and artifices of the court of Rome."[492] Basing himself on Matthew Paris' (c. 1254 — 1259) continuation of his *Chronica Majora* (c. 1253), Hume steps forward to say that Henry III's kingdom stands as proof that "the great dignitaries of the Catholic church, while they pretended to have nothing in view but the salvation of the souls, had bent all their attention to the acquisition of the riches, and were restrained by no sense of justice or of honour, in the pursuit of that great object."[493]

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[490] HE 2.12:4.
[491] HE 2.12:4.
[492] HE 2.12:4.
[493] HE 2.12:4.

Henry III's reign also illustrates how the pope and his courtiers knew very little about most of the churches they governed and how that caused them to pillage many provinces for present gain. Also, as they lived far from many of them, England included, they "would be little awed by shame or remorse" when employing their lucrative expedients.[494]

## 5.4. Evidence and Causality

Some years before the publication of the first volume of his *History of England*, more specifically between 1749 and 1751, Hume immersed himself in an intensive and systematic study of classical literature.[495] The two-year literary retreat at his family estate in Ninewells, sixty kilometers north of Edinburgh, allowed him to engage with literature he had previously read and discover new authors. From the vast array of options available at the local parish library in the adjacent village of Chirnside and at his home library—which impressively grew between 1747 and 1753—Cicero, Polybius, and Xenophon strongly appealed to him.[496] One of the most impressive results of Hume's Stoic hideaway is his lengthy 1752 essay *Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations*, later published in his *Political Discourses.* Based on an extended reading of Greek texts, an ability Hume perfected during his refuge, the essay exposes the historian's vast knowledge of foreign sources such as Strabo's *Geographika*, whose review largely depended on considerable Greek reading proficiency. In his studies, Hume chose specific texts not because of their canonical status but due to their relevance to the causal analysis of the subjects examined. His major worry was more the pertinence of the information and less the author's authority in the cannon.

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[494] HE 2.12:4.

[495] BAUMSTARK, Moritz. *David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian,* p. 66. BAUMSTARK, Moritz. Hume's Readings of the Classics at Ninewells, pp. 72–73.

[496] HL 1:170. NORTON, David, NORTON, Mary J. *The David Hume Library*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Bibliographical Society, 1996, pp. 13-4. BAUMSTARK, Moritz. *David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian*, p. 72.

Furthermore, like *Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences, Of The Populousness of Ancient Nations* also anticipated some of the *History of England*'s most fundamental methodological aspects and the relationship between the two texts represent a continuity in Hume's thought.

*Of the Populousness* accommodates various digressions concerning classical Greek and Roman cultural practices and political environments. In fact, taking a break from the main historical narrative to include further descriptions of social and cultural circumstances was a standard procedure in the Scottish Enlightenment historiography. Both Adam Smith and Hugh Blair, in their *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* and their classes on "Historical Writing" at the University of Edinburgh in 1759 and 1760, described a marked and ever more popular tendency of including additional layers of social and cultural description to histories to which Hume's *History* was akin. Blair, for instance, said:

> I cannot conclude the subject of history, without taking notice of a very great improvement which has, of late years, begun to be introduced into historical composition; I mean, a more particular attention than was formerly given to laws, customs, commerce, religion, literature and every other thing that lends to show the spirit and genius of nations. It is now understood to be the business of an able historian to exhibit manners, as well as facts and events; and assuredly, whatever displays the state of life and mankind, in different periods, and illustrates the progress of the human mind, is more useful and interesting than the details of sieges and battles.[497]

The broad scope of contents Hume referred to in *Of the Populousness* presents the reader with evidence that he believed that political features did not exclusively dictate demographic growth; it combined with other factors, such as religious beliefs, moral codes, customs, and sexual mores. Hume's extended network of causation

[497] Quotation and its context were taken from EMERSON, Roger L. "Hume's Histories". In: *David Hume, Medical Men, and the Scottish Enlightenment: Industry, Knowledge, and Humanity*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009, p. 128.

would reappear even more decisively in his subsequent *History of England.* In the *History*, incorporating other aspects into the described events' webs of causation is especially noticeable in the appendices, or whenever Hume evaluated the end of a reign, particularly in the sections he called *Miscellaneous Transactions of this Reign.* The *Miscellaneous Transactions* sections appear ten times throughout the *History*'s multiple volumes and concede Hume's arguments better sophistication. In the *Miscellaneous Transactions* of Henry III's kingdom, for instance, Hume articulates an evaluation of the kingdom's laws, commercial practices, and relationship to the Roman Catholic church to justify the successes and failures of a king and kingdom he abhorred. [498] Moreover, antiquarian studies deeply inspired the *Miscellaneous Transactions* sections. Examples are the usual references to English poet, antiquarian, and historian Thomas Rymer, whom Hume extensively cites in the *History*'s Medieval volumes. Rymer's detailed description of the Crown's revenue during Henry V's kingdom elucidates how relevant antiquarians were for Hume and, as seen in Chapters Two and Three, that his philosophical history is not as far apart from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century erudite histories as one might think.[499]

If, on the one hand, *Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations* stands as proof of Hume's erudition and desire to attend to historical composition's renewed demands, on the other, it was his principal means to intervene in the British version of the *querelle des anciens et des modernes*, the so-called "battle of the books."[500] More recent studies of Hume's historical thought have pointed to the fact that from the early 1750s on, he took a side at the *querelle*'s comparative evaluation of ancient and modern accomplishments. That happened because, after considerably deepening his historical knowledge about the ancient world at Ninewells, Hume developed new tools to opine and publicly share the belief that historical progress was unavoidable. Despite

[498] HE 2.12:65–72.
[499] HE 2.19:379–381.
[500] BAUMSTARK, Moritz. *David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian*, p. 76.

recognizing several of the ancients' successes, especially concerning the excellence of classical republics, he made a strong case for the superiority of his present-time modern and commercial societies.[501] Past and Present comparisons abound in his early 1750s writings, chiefly in the *Political Discourses*. Furthermore, as one would naturally expect, they are also very present in his *History of England*—a direct product of his intellectual advancements and ambitions in the late 1740s and early 1750s. For Hume to counterpoint the common eighteenth-century *topos* that there had not been a general decline in human affairs since late Antiquity, his research had to be largely historical.

In those comparisons between past and present, Hume testifies to the decisiveness of general causes in scrutinizing historical evidence.[502] Usually, Hume holds to the differentiation of facts and causes through those comparisons, also announcing how causal analysis defines our understanding of historical facts. If, at first, the references to Antiquity seemed to appear only to embellish his mentions of the ancient world and its historians, in some parts of the *Political Discourses* and the *History* they formed the groundwork for his most pivotal arguments. Returning to the *History*'s volume I, readers understand Antiquity's applicability to Hume's assertions. Hume opens the *History*'s appendix I with an evaluation of the first Saxon government. His argument, which would be of vital importance to the rest of the narrative, is that, despite the rusticity of their manners, "the government of the Germans, and that of all the northern nations, who established themselves under the ruins of Rome, was always extremely free".[503] Hume then analyzes in detail the institution of their Law. References to their courts of justice, criminal law, rules of proof, methods of trial, and military force overflow.[504] After carefully studying Tacitus' lessons, he also states that

[501] BAUMSTARK, Moritz. *David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian*, p. 77.
[502] FARIA, Pedro. *History, Moral Philosophy, and Social Theory in David Hume's Intellectual Development (1739–1752)*, p. 149.
[503] HE 1.App.1:160.
[504] HE 1.App.1:160.169–182.

the Romans introduced laws and civility to the Britons, but in 448, after they "bid a final adieu to Britain," part of those manners were lost.[505]

Later, Hume points out that information about the Romans' later departure is precarious. The chronicles do not inform exactly "what species of civil government" the Romans left to the Britons. However, he manages to infer by probability and a cross-reference of texts by Gildas, Bede, and William of Malmesbury that it must have been an independent and district-level regal government primarily characterized by precarious authority.[506] In any way, Hume uses inferential reasoning and probability to sustain the general maxim that the independence and disordered growth of those rude communities alarmed the local clergy, who became "more intent on suppressing them."[507] The Briton's fear of those domestic evils and the constant threat of more foreign invasions suggested that they accepted the councils of Vortigern, prince of Dummonium, who, by holding the authority among them, "sent into Germany a deputation to invite over the Saxons for their protection and assistance."[508] For Hume, the Saxons' arrival into Great Britain was decisive for the configuration of Britain's eighteenth-century political institutions. Despite all the setbacks and contradictions posed by posterior historical facts, the Saxon period was when the British originally learned to limit the prerogatives of a kingly government.

It is interesting to watch Hume's method in action and how he became able to extract valuable information from apparently useless sources throughout the process of writing his *History of England*. A reader of the *Treatise,* the *Essays,* the *Enquiries*, and the *Political Discourses*, could hardly imagine that the Annals of Waverly Abbey, Ingulf's *Historia Monasterii Croylandensis*, and Gervase of Tilbury would overabound in the footnotes of a skeptical writer. Nevertheless, it was precisely his skepticism what

[505] HE 1.1:10–13.
[506] HE 1.1:14.
[507] HE 1.1:14.
[508] HE 1.1:15.

pushed for such a diversity of references. Where Pierre Bayle and other seventeenth-century skeptics found obstacles that history would supposedly never overcome due to the untrustworthiness of sources, Hume saw possibilities for historical investigation. All in all, the historical method that enabled the *History of England* mixed a more conventional critique of sources and a comprehensive cross-reference of materials to verify their partial or complete reliability. It is likely that, for Hume, the imperfection of sources did not invalidate them—it just required more of the historian's skepticism. From a Humean standpoint, it was the awareness of general causes that guaranteed confidence in the source, not the marvelous, the superstitious, or the untrustworthy they were impregnated with. Also, in the case of ancient sources, their ambiguity demanded Hume to overlap causes and facts. This is why the procedure historians should follow can be reconstructed like this: first, they should question whether things could have happened as the materials indicate (inquiring about the plausibility of causes); then, they should assess if it was so in reality (inquiring about the absoluteness of facts). For an enterprise of the magnitude of the *History of England*, it was imprudent to reject all ancient sources from the beginning. Consequently, instead of questioning the ethics of ancient historians, Hume tried hard to find hints of coherence in them.

Undoubtedly, the *History of England*'s central thesis is that the English mixed Constitution results from a general historical process dating back to Julius Caesar's invasion of the island of Great Britain. By and large, that process can be described as a fight between opposite "ancient *versus* modern" poles: authority *vs.* liberty, rusticity *vs.* refinement, and, lastly, crisis *vs.* stability.[509] As put by Pedro Pimenta, those poles represent a deep and conflicting relationship between justice's general rules, *sine qua non* conditions of order and political life, and the natural passions, which incite men and women to the maintenance of their original freedom and their primary desires'

[509] GARRIDO, Pedro Paulo Pimenta. Apresentação à edição brasileira, p. XI.

satisfaction. As Pimenta evaluates, what fascinates Hume is that the pushes and pulls and an irregularity so typical and characteristic of English history produced a regular plan of liberty—the most extensive any European nation had ever seen.[510] In the *History,* the general causes serve to the understanding of England's political institutions' developments. From the early 1750s, many of Hume's *Essays* started resting less on philosophical conjecture and more on the critical methods of textual scholarship and the fusing of what Hume referred to as "enquiry concerning facts" and "enquiry concerning causes."[511] As historians often deal with imperfect traces, historical methods and practice should interlace causes and facts. Where the facts cannot be "ascertained with any tolerable assurance," historians should first consider their probability and assess their verisimilitude to ordinary experience.[512] In other words, enquiries concerning causes exist to make history viable, to make up for the absence of details or even facts by inference and reasonings presupposed from the general and universal springs of human nature. In fact, the 1740s essays represent an inflection point in Hume's intellectual development, one that shaped dramatically the composition of his *History of England*—it is when causality begins to occupy the center of Hume's historical analyses.

As previously argued, the essays published in *Political Discourses* introduce several key elements of Hume's historical method. *Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences, Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations*, and a footnote in *Of the Balance of Power* epitomize Hume's methodological approach to his preferred historical object so far: the domestic revolutions of states.[513] Such a footnote examines the probability of early Roman history, arguing that recent suspicions concerning early

[510] GARRIDO, Pedro Paulo Pimenta. Apresentação à edição brasileira, p. XII.
[511] BAUMSTARK, Moritz. *David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian*, pp. 78–79. E 381.
[512] E 381.
[513] E 633. Pedro Faria's PhD thesis emphasizes that footnote has passed "almost completely unnoticed by the scholarly literature." According to him, Baumstark's PhD thesis, presented in 2007 at the University of Edinburgh, is one of the few exceptions. FARIA, Pedro. *History, Moral Philosophy, and Social Theory in David Hume's Intellectual Development*, p. 118.

Roman history were scarcely defensible. According to Hume, skepticism on the subject was not justifiable since domestic Roman history possessed "some air of truth and probability."[514] That meant its revolutions seemingly fit their causes, political experience justified the factions and zealotry, and the manners and maxims of the age were uniform and natural.[515] In short, although the footnote recognizes skepticism towards historical evidence, it underscores two elements. The first is that since domestic affairs are hardly ever falsified, they are history's most pertinent object. The second, as accurately perceived by Pedro Faria, is that Hume was likely to accept the narratives of ancient historians despite their problems and excesses because Machiavelli, for example, was able to elaborate a political theory from, perhaps, false accounts. Still according to Faria, Hume's perception follows De Pouilly's 1722 argument that, if evidence allowed a historian to design theories and generalize from it, such a procedure conferred certainty to the sources on which the evidence was found.[516]

Faria also tells us that Hume's historical method, as developed prior to the *History of England,* is an advancement of part of the methodological discussions on history that took place in the *Académie des Inscriptions*', especially those led by Bernard Le Bouyer de Fontenelle and Nicolas Fréret, a few decades before. Fontenelle and Fréret tied historical evidence's internal and external probabilities by asserting that the construction of the testimony is, in itself, a historical process.[517] For Hume, historical evidence was based on trusting historians' and witnesses' morals and testimonies. In other words, history depended upon the moral authority of the events' contemporaries, whom Hume supposed had a natural inclination towards truthfulness

[514] E 633.
[515] E 633.
[516] FARIA, Pedro. *History, Moral Philosophy, and Social Theory in David Hume's Intellectual Development*, p. 119.
[517] FARIA, Pedro. *History, Moral Philosophy, and Social Theory in David Hume's Intellectual Development*, p. 121.

and who others would have disgraced in case of forgery. From a Humean perspective, "the moral evidence that sustains belief in historical testimony has the same nature as the evidence that supports our expectations concerning natural events."[518] Such an assumption was essential to the *History of England*'s composition, where Hume had to deal with various sources of the most diverse nature. As suggested above, following the *History*'s footnotes, the reader sees how the author dealt with chronicles, annals, *corpi* of laws, first- and second-hand testimonies, original documents, antiquarian studies, and other histories. What one sees in the *History* is a movement that had already started years before—an internal assessment of the evidence, using verisimilitude to experience to accept or reject its truthfulness. Even when the materials analyzed were "fabulous annals"[519], which one could not entirely believe, Hume's methodology was bound to extracting truthfulness from them in an operation that combined sophisticated inferential reasoning and probability.

Hume's scheme for treating historical evidence heavily relied on the neutralization of adverse reactions that historical materials' extended course of transmission might cause. Especially when dealing with a remote past, historians commonly face a confusing, multi-linked, and lengthy path between historical events' agents or bystanders and the readers. In any case, if for older historical traditions such a belief was a source of historical uncertainty, for Hume, it was the opposite. For him, historical evidence was a paradigmatic case of belief that could be assured by a proper critique of the work of printers, copyists, and the resemblance of the chains of transmissions to our experience.[520] In addition, historical belief was also produced by the authority of history, historians, and their narratives. Regardless of the eighteenth-century readership pressure a reframings and reconceptualizations of history's central,

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[518] FARIA, Pedro. *History, Moral Philosophy, and Social Theory in David Hume's Intellectual Development*, p. 125.
[519] HE 1.1:23.
[520] FARIA, Pedro. *History, Moral Philosophy, and Social Theory in David Hume's Intellectual Development*, p. 124.

its perceived prime moral ambition and decorum exerted enormous influence over its consumers. Eighteenth-century readers, just by assuming a book was a history rather than a novel, entered its universe with a different attitude; they imagined its narration as more truthful and livelier. [521]

Hume's challenge in the *History of England* was to conciliate his complex system of the treatment of historical evidence with another of history's function by the mid-eighteenth century: entertainment. Notably, when working with sources he considered dreary and filled with fantasies, Hume assumed it was acceptable to use them without a scrutiny of their fantastic assumptions for the sake of the amusement a historical narrative should provide.[522] Despite the sources' flaws, Hume seems to trust the bystanders' and historians' moral inevitability. As some conjectures were presupposed to be constant, very few historians would be interested in consciously plotting against truth. In that manner, questionable sources and materials abound in what came to be the *History*'s volume I from the 1778 edition on. Encompassing British history from the Roman invasion to King John's death in 1216, the material heavily relied on secondary sources, mainly other histories, and chronicles. If it had been for Hume's selection solely of materials he fully trusted or enjoyed reading, his *History* would not have been viable. Examples are the many monkish chroniclers he refers to when narrating the Anglo-Saxon, Feudal, and Anglo-Norman societies. Actually, at the end of his narrative of the Heptarchy, Hume explains his opinion about the Monks:

> The Monks, who were the only annalists during those ages, lived remote from public affairs, considered the civil transactions as entirely subordinate to the ecclesiastical, and besides partaking of the ignorance and barbarity, which were then universal, were strongly infected with credulity, with the love of wonder, and with a propensity to imposture; vices almost inseparable from their profession, and manner of life. The history of that period abounds in names, but is extremely barren of events; or the events are related so much without circumstances and causes, that

[521] PHILLIPS, Mark. *Society and Sentiment*, pp. 14–15.
[522] THN 3.3.4.14

> the most profound eloquent writer must despair of rendering them either instructive or entertaining to the reader.[523]

This critique of the Monks and their chronicles reveal a vital aspect of Hume's conception of history, historical causality, and evidence: the historical and miraculous realms do not intersect. Section 10 of Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Of Miracles* had already anticipated the author's discussion of belief in testimonies and, therefore, the viability of history.[524] *Of Miracles* weighs evidence's probabilities by considering a testimony internally and externally.[525] Internally, while evaluating human testimonies' verisimilitude, one must always confront it to his own experience. Externally, by means of authority, one should give testimonies the benefit of doubt, especially historians' ones. However, miraculous testimonies, to which monks are inclined, are the most vulnerable kind of human when confronted with our own experience. Miracles were a product of wonder—an agreeable and easily animated passion that historians must tame not to fall under imposture and excessive credulity, universals in the ignorant and barbarous times of ancient, pre-civilized England. For Hume, excessive credulity and miracles allowed an unnatural experience of nature, thus configuring a violation of nature's unquestionable laws.[526] One of the *History of England's* most potent motors is the inexorable force that moves nations towards the cultivated, skilled, tempered, and ordered modern times.[527]

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[523] HE 1.1:25.
[524] EHU 10.4.
[525] FARIA, Pedro. *History, Moral Philosophy, and Social Theory in David Hume's Intellectual Development*, p. 127–128.
[526] EHU 10.10.
[527] My selection of adjectives to describe Hume's conception of the enlightened, modern times, are based on his description of the manners of the Anglo-Saxons, one of the rudest peoples to have ever inhabited England. As Hume described them: "with regard to the manners of the Anglo-Saxons we can say little, but that they were in general a rude, uncultivated people, ignorant of letters, unskilled in the mechanical arts, untamed to submission under law and government, addicted to intemperance, riot, and disorder". HE 1.App.1:185.

# *Five*
## *The Method Theorized*

Hume's conception of history was that of a form of knowledge that explained social phenomena, extracting its authority and truthfulness from the comparisons it performs among the causal evidence of shreds of events, especially common testimonies, the accounts of past historians, and everyday experience. Since miracles excessively animate amiable passions and cannot be confirmed by many educated men, history does not explain them. In opposition, history illustrates how and why people's "spirits of religion" have been touched. An example from the *History of England* is Hume's description of the introduction of Christianity in the Kingdom of Kent in the sixth century. The kingdom that started with Escus' succession of his father, Hengist, was marked by a sequence of unmemorable administrations until Ethelbert came to power in 589.[528] For Hume, despite deliberately rejecting the Christian religion, its introduction during Ethelbert's reign represented a step forward in Old England's civilization process. Christianity replaced the "rude" Saxon religion that, founded on popular and ancestral tales, could not be reduced to any rational system, and was not supported by political institutions. For the latter claim, his example is that of the Druids.[529] In any way, Christianity, which was introduced by a wish from Bertha, Ethelbert's wife, was better than "the superstition of the Germans, particularly that of the Saxons" which "was of the grossest and most barbarous kind."[530]

Christianity touched the British Saxons' "spirit of religion" after the arrival of Augustine in Kent in 597.[531] Facilitated by Bertha's popularity in the court and her influence over her husband, the introduction of the Christian doctrine and subsequent conversion of the Saxons in the island of Great Britain had long been in pontiff Gregory's mind. Gregory assigned Augustine, a Roman monk, for the task. Trusting Ranulf Higden's *Polychornicon* (c. 1350), Hume asserted Augustine arrived in Kent in

[528] HE 1.1:26.
[529] HE 1.1:26.
[530] HE 1.1:26.
[531] HE 1.1:29.

597 to start preaching the gospel to the Kentish Saxons.[532] According to Hume, the Kentish conversion was accelerated by Augustine's excitement of the population's wonder and their easy belief in the "so contrary to nature", miracles.[533]

Hume does not detail either the miracles the British Saxons believed in or their Saxon religious practices since both were acknowledged as gross and ignorant. However, he considered a subject of history the fact that the Saxons, in general, had the propensity to believe in outrageous things. In that sense, what he tries to unveil are not the practices themselves but their causes, which led the Saxons to act the way they did. From the chroniclers' testimonies, Hume tried to build a consistent historical depiction based on probable causes. If, overall, the historians' materials are full of fantastic and outlandish references, it is the historians' duty to filter and extract some truth from them. As Faria suggests, by doing so, Hume was proceeding in the same way as the *academiciens*' when they theorized what they called *fond de l'histoire*: the connection of pieces of evidence that were articulated in a narrative or picture compatible with common causal experience.[534] In short, from a Humean perspective, even the most extraordinary and improbable events explained by history are not miraculous; they are natural and nature's laws are sovereign. [535]

[532] HE 1.1:30.
[533] HE 1.1:30.
[534] FARIA, Pedro. *History, Moral Philosophy, and Social Theory in David Hume's Intellectual Development*, p. 134.
[535] EHU 10.10.

# CONCLUSION

At this point, I expect to have provided a convincing presentation of a few salient aspects of Hume's historical theory and practice. The first important consideration is the recognition of the fact that Hume had been aware of the kind of philosophical history he wanted to write before he engaged with his multi-volume *History of England.* Even though the project suffered many alterations throughout its execution and revisions, the underlying assumption is that Hume had an idea of how to proceed since he had been reflecting on what history was, what it explained, and how it explained. Although Hume passed away ten years after Voltaire used the expression "philosophy of history" for the first time, around half a decade before John Logan wrote his *Elements of the Philosophy of History*, and many years before historians and philosophers—most remarkably in Germany—acknowledged the need to distinguish between *historia res gestae* (the course of events) and *historia rerum gestarum* (the stories that people tell about the course of events), he was acutely conscious of the difference between historical reality and what materials, people, and testimonies tell that reality was.[536]

As a result, we can conclude that Hume was a moral philosopher who directly contributed to the philosophy and theory of history. His reflections comprise both a material and a formal philosophy of history. His philosophy of history's material facet is intimately linked to the way he addresses historical reality, presupposing an overall tendency of progress in modern Europe's "historical process."[537] Nevertheless, Hume did not, as other famous material or speculative philosophers of history, find a particular motor in the past that guided progress and allowed him to predict the future. In fact, speculations about what the future has in stock do not belong in the scope of Hume's work and in his understanding of the functions of history. Be that as it may, it

[536] PAUL, Herman. *Key Issues in Historical Theory*. London: Routledge, 2015, p. 3.
[537] For the connection of material philosophies of history and the historical process, see PAUL, Herman. *Key Issues in Historical Theory*, p. 4.

is undeniable that the structure of his historical thought advanced an empirical and secular theory of historical knowledge grounded on the notion that, despite certain moments of setback, modern European societies greatly improved throughout time. As the Middle Ages and the period of the English Civil War showed, progress was not always steady and constant; however, in the totality of history, it ultimately prevailed over decline.[538] In that sense, a significant aspect of the pedagogical function of the *History of England* was that of remembering society of those specific periods and conjectures of interruption and threat to progress while recalling that the forces catapulting progress and decline are inherent of human nature.[539]

In addition, his philosophy of history was formal because its analytical, or critical, features offered considerations on the nature of historical knowledge, the character of history's explanatory devices, and the principles of historical narrative. Also, Hume's formal philosophy of history was deeply rooted in his general epistemology and aimed to throw into relief the specificities of historical knowledge when compared to neighboring branches of thought and genres. It also intended to clarify what made history trustworthy and valuable to its readers. Last, his philosophy of history was genuinely worried about the meaning and relevance of bottom-line concepts in historiographical practice, such as evidence, truth, event, cause, and impartiality. Hume's multi-layered philosophy of history was deeply influenced by metaphysical and epistemological assumptions about the nature of history in its *res gestae* sense.

The second relevant fact about Hume's historical theory and practice emphasized in this text is the argument that Hume's reflections on history have a major methodological component. Throughout time, not all theoretically minded historians

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[538] FARIA, Pedro. The Structure of Hume's Historical Thought before the History of England. *Intellectual History Review*, 2022, pp. 1–3.

[539] SCHMIDT, Claudia M. David Hume as a Philosopher of History. In: SPENCER, Mark G (ed.). *David Hume, Historical Thinker, Historical Writer*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, p. 171

have made extensive comments on methodology or proposed a historical method during their careers. Nonetheless, as Hume's detailed reflections on history often explain the fundamental techniques for composing a reliable account of the past demand, we can unequivocally state that his sparse but coherent ruminations on history advance a historical method. A method that privileged textual evidence from witnesses or copyists and considered the effects of the chains of transmission on the historian's practice in the present. In that manner, his method turned witnesses, compilers, and commentators into historical agents themselves, taking into consideration the effects of their historical and "historiographical situations" upon the historians.[540] Hume usually evaluated those "situations" from the twofold perspective of the internal (i.e., character, personality traits) and external (i.e., the historical context of events and structures) circumstances that motivated those agents' actions and behaviors.

The third relevant aspect this thesis proposes is the understanding that Hume, pressured by the many forces and powers that shaped a historical text, had to negotiate certain re-elaborate and accommodate certain elements of his method and original intentions, especially as he moved forward in the *History of England*'s undertaking in the 1750s. That happened as the author felt the need to meet the socially perceived value and functions of historiography in Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century. As history entertained and instructed, it could not overwhelm readers with digressions too extensive and overly detailed descriptions and explanations. Moreover, the intense demands for an impartial text forced Hume to adjust, adapt, and hide ideas, opinions, and positions while writing his *History of England.* Even though this text does not offer a wider view of a broader tradition of history writing across Europe, those pulls and pushes point to the existence of external

[540] On the notion of "historiographical situations", see PAUL, Herman. Weak Historicism: On Hierarchies of Intellectual Virtues and Goods. *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, v. 6, n. 3, 2012, pp. 369–388.

tensions that shaped not only Hume's final text but also a good deal of eighteenth-century European historiography.

On a closing note, it is essential to underscore that Hume's historical theory reverberated in the reflections of other posterior and canonical speculative and analytical philosophers of history, such as Comte, Hegel, Hempel, and Danto, among many others. Especially Hume's influence over Danto, when theorizing about the limits of historical knowledge in his *Analytical Philosophy of History*, has been systematically overlooked by scholarship. Examples are Hume's entertainment of the possibility that the complexion of the world might change, after which none of our general laws would hold; Hume's distinction between memories and images, essential to Danto's wide-ranging reflection on verification; Hume's considerations on the deduction of effects from their causes; Hume's definition of a historical event, the threads linking them, and the sort of narrative description events afford; and, very significantly, Hume's repudiation of miracles as historical evidence, among several others.[541]

All in all, present-day historians, especially researchers on historical theory and historical theorists themselves, can only benefit from a thorough reading of Hume's historical reflections on historical theory and the historical process, as well as from the recognition of their significance to posterior generations of historians and historically minded thinkers from different fields. Writing in a style that mingled traditional elements of historiography with the eighteenth-century renewed tools of a philosophical history written on neoclassical standards, Hume's text offers its readers a rich material to reflect upon history's aesthetics as well as its value and functions in the 1700s. Standing until today as one of the finest examples of the complex and multiform legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment's view of history, David Hume was a master of historical distance, portraying in his text, with his singular narrative style, an elevated

[541] DANTO, Arthur. *Analytical Philosophy of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965, pp. 23–24, 38, 63, 76–77, 103–106, 140–141, 154–157.

philosophical view of human affairs and magnificent representations of the most diverse historical agents.

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# DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I herewith declare that I wrote the present Ph.D. thesis independently and did not use any unnamed sources or aid. Thus, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference was made by citation. Also, no substantial part has been submitted for any other degree, diploma, or qualification at the University of Brasilia or any other university or similar institution.

Pedro Eduardo Batista Ferreira da Silva