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ARTHUR E. McGUINNESS

Hume and Kames: The Burdens of Friendship

The few scholars who have studied Henry Home, Lord Kames, have either neglected or misunderstood his association with David Hume. Lounsbury, writing in pre-Malahide Castle days, declared that "Hume had no special intimacy with Kames."¹ Helen Randall, in the only scholarly book which deals specifically with the life of Kames, gives very little attention to his relationship with Hume.² A clear understanding of this relationship was in fact impossible before the publication in 1954 of Professor Mossner's scholarly *Life of David Hume* and of the complete text of the Hume-Kames letters in *New Hume Letters*.³ An analysis of all the evidence now available will show that Hume's relationship with Kames was both more intimate and more significant than these scholars believed.

The first record of a friendship between David Hume and Henry Home is a letter written by Hume in 1737, when he was twenty-six and the future Lord Kames forty-one. Reference to previous letters ex-

¹ Thomas R. Lounsbury, *Shakespeare and Voltaire* (New York, 1902), p. 256.

² Helen Whitcomb Randall, "The Critical Theory of Lord Kames," *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages*, XXII, Nos. 1-4 (1940-41). Miss Randall's doctoral dissertation, "The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of Henry Home, Lord Kames" (Yale University, 1937), develops much of this material more fully.

³ Ernest C. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (Edinburgh, 1954). *New Letters of David Hume*, ed. Raymond Klibansky and Ernest C. Mossner (Oxford, 1954).

In addition to these two major sources, extensive material for tracing the Hume-Kames relationship is found in *Private Papers of James Boswell from Malahide Castle*, ed. Geoffrey Scott and Frederick A. Pottle 18 vols. (Mt. Vernon, New York, 1928-37; Alexander Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Honourable Henry Home of Kames*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1807); and *The Letters of David Hume*, ed. J. Y. T. Greig, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1932). In his unpublished doctoral dissertation, "The Most Arrogant Man in the World: The Life and Writings of Henry Home, Lord Kames" (Texas, 1960), Ian S. Ross explores the Hume-Kames relationship in light of the discoveries of Mossner and Klibansky. Ross's emphasis is decidedly pro-Kames, as one would expect in a biographical study. He presents the entire relationship as one between student (Hume) and teacher (Kames).

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changed pushes the time of correspondence back at least to 1733, when Hume left Scotland for four years in London and France. And the extremely intimate tone of the letter suggests a friendship of much longer duration, dating perhaps from Hume's youth in Berwickshire, where both were born—Home in 1696, Hume in 1711—on family estates ten miles apart.

Any attempt to recreate meetings between the young Hume and the aspiring Edinburgh lawyer would be fanciful, though Mossner insists that the families exchanged visits and that "David as a boy would probably have looked up to Henry as a learned and intellectual man."⁴ By the time Hume arrived at Edinburgh College to study law in 1723, Home was already an advocate and a vocal member of the Rankenian Club, a group of Edinburgh intellectuals dedicated to supplementing the rather drab formal education then offered at the University. "It is well known that between 1723 and 1740, nothing was in more request with the Edinburgh literati, clerical and laical, than metaphysical disquisition. These they regarded as more pleasant themes than either theological or political controversies, of which by that time people were surfeited."⁵ In these days Home thought it was great sport "to puzzle and make mischief" among the unsuspecting, and "succeeded but too well with many, making them Deists."⁶

Although Hume almost always remained deferential to a man fifteen years his senior, it is clear that the two were on an equal basis as friends from those early days in Edinburgh. A friend of Henry Home, reminiscing to him in a letter in 1742, recalls "how your friend David and you used to laugh at a most sublime declamation I one night made, after a drunken expedition to Cupar, on the impotency of corruption in certain circumstances."⁷ And Hume was not the only younger man whom Home treated as an equal. Alexander Tytler, his biographer, recalls a similar treatment. The age difference was fifty years! "Though more than fifty years younger than his venerable friend, who had been the companion and friend of his Father,—he could say, as Cato of Quintus Maximus, 'Senem adolescens ita dilexi ut aequalem; erat enim in illo viro comitate condita gravitas; nec senectus mores mutaverat.'"⁸

⁴ Mossner, p. 57.

⁵ John Ramsey of Ochtertyre, *Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Alexander Allardyce (Edinburgh and London, 1888), I, 195-96. Quoted in Mossner, p. 49.

⁶ Boswell, *Private Papers*, XV, 284. Henceforth Boswell.

⁷ Tytler, I, 80.

⁸ Tytler, I, vii.

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The Picture evoked by this evidence is of a Henry Home in his mid-thirties taking a group of aspiring young law students under his wing and introducing them to the extracurricular activities of Edinburgh and the neighboring towns—the coffee houses, the oyster cellars, the taverns, the assemblies. All his life an ardent patron of the arts and sciences, and especially of the deserving youth of both sexes, Henry Home was a past master of the social amenities.⁹

This two-fold quality of respect and intimate friendship is evident in the 1737 letter referred to above. Hume has been working in France for three years on the *Treatise of Human Nature* and Home, having heard about it, is anxious to learn of its contents. It is interesting that the first extant piece of evidence to document the Hume-Kames relationship should indicate the latter's eagerness to read the *Treatise*. David's reply is courteous and frank—a friend speaking to a friend:

I am very sorry I am not able to satisfy your Curiosity by giving you some general Notion of the Plan upon which I proceed. But my Opinions are so new, & even some Terms I am oblig'd to make Use of, that I cou'd not propose, by any Abridgement to give my System an Air of Likelihood, or so much as make it intelligible. . . . I have a great Desire of communicating to you the Plan of the Whole. . . . But here I must tell you of one of my Foibles. I have a great Inclination to go down to Scotland this Spring to see my Friends, & have your Advice concerning my philosophical Discoveries; but cannot overcome a certain Shamefacedness I have to appear among you at my Years without having yet a Settlement or so much as having attempted any.¹⁰

This is hardly the man whom Home would later accuse of "having no warmth of friendship."¹¹ The letter also indicates that Home was the one who expressed original interest in the first two books of the *Treatise*. He later told Boswell that David had "begged he would read them."¹² Hume continues the letter, asking Home to read an enclosed early version of the essay "Of Miracles," withheld from publication until 1748.

But most significant are the following lines, the indelicacy of which resulted in their partial expurgation from all printed sources including Greig's definitive edition until the *New Letters* in 1954. "It argues an early intimacy between the two men hitherto unsuspected."¹³

⁹ Mossner, p. 59.

¹⁰ *New Letters*, pp. 1-2.

¹¹ Boswell, XV, 276.

¹² Boswell, XV, 273.

¹³ *New Letters*, p. 2.

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I beg of you show it [the essay on miracles] to no Body, . . . & let me know at your Leisure that you have receiv'd it, read it, & burnt it. I wou'd not even have you make another nameless Use of it, to which it wou'd not be improper, for fear of Accidents.¹⁴

The earliest evidence of direct intervention by Home in behalf of Hume is correspondence from the latter in 1737, thanking Home for writing him a letter of introduction to Joseph Butler. In 1736 Butler had published the *Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature*, ". . . a dispassionate and well-reasoned work, designed to convince the Deists by empirical arguments that their refutations of Christianity were equally valid against their own Religion of Nature. The *Analogy* was to remain the one theological work of the century that Hume was to deem worthy of serious consideration."¹⁵ Naturally David was anxious to meet Butler, who seemed such a kindred spirit. Having just returned from several years abroad, he had really had little time to make literary acquaintances. Henry Home quickly assured him of a letter of introduction, though he himself had only recently met Butler under rather unusual circumstances:

In the spring of 1737, Henry Home, on a visit to London, was anxious to meet Butler, then Clerk of the Closet to Queen Caroline and Dean of St. Paul's. Applying to Lord Islay, Home was told, "I know not how to get you introduced but by introducing you to the Queen, and she will introduce You to her favorite Chaplain." Discouraged by this prospect, Home finally went to Butler's residence and brazened an entrance. He was courteously received and offered a dish of chocolate. After two hours of pleasant conversation, the Scottish philosopher-lawyer left, to return later for a second interview.¹⁶

Home's assurances and his letter to Butler gratified Hume, although David was a bit disturbed at the brashness of his friend. "I shall not trouble you," he wrote from London, "with any formal compliment or thanks, which would be but an ill return for the kindness you have done me in writing in my behalf, to one you are so little acquainted with as Dr. Butler; and I am afraid, stretching the truth in favour of a friend."¹⁷

Honesty in the midst of philosophical crisis and a warm friendship with Home are revealed as the letter goes on. Hume was never this candid with any but his closest friends:

¹⁴ *New Letters*, p. 2.

¹⁵ Mossner, p. 110.

¹⁶ Mossner, p. 110.

¹⁷ Greig, I, 25.

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I am a little anxious to have the Doctor's opinion. My own I dare not trust to; both because it concerns myself, and because it is so variable, that I know not how to fix it. Sometimes it elevates me above the clouds; at other times, it depresses me with doubts and fears; so that whatever be my success I cannot be entirely disappointed.

Somebody has told me that you might perhaps be in London this spring. I should esteem this a very lucky event; and notwithstanding all the pleasures of the town [Hume recalls student days in Edinburgh with Home!], I would certainly engage you to pass some philosophical evenings with me, and either correct my judgement, where you differ from me, or confirm it where we agree. I believe I have some need of the one as well as the other; and though propensity to diffidence be an error on the better side, yet 'tis an error, and dangerous, as well as disagreeable.¹⁸

There is no evidence that Home accepted Hume's invitation, but it is likely enough that he did, in which case he would have heard first-hand the speculations which were to be published as Books I and II of the *Treatise* the following winter. David wrote another letter to Henry Home in February, 1739, two weeks after publication of his book. Once again portions of the letter which testify to the close friendship between the two were omitted from all printed sources until *New Letters* in 1954.¹⁹

The letter generally reveals David's apprehensions about the success of the *Treatise*. "My Principles are so remote from all the vulgar Sentiments on this Subject, that were they to take place, they wou'd produce almost a total Alteration in Philosophy; & you know Revolutions of this kind are not easily brought about."²⁰ His apprehensions were well-founded; the book, in his own words, "fell deadborn from the press."²¹ He then reaffirms his intention of satisfying the curiosity of Henry Home, which had prompted the 1737 letter. "You may believe that I aspire to your Approbation; & next to that to your free Censure

¹⁸ Greig, I, 25-26.

¹⁹ It is curious that even so careful a scholar as Greig, who edited the Royal Society's Catalog of Hume manuscripts, should make such omissions. What probably happened is that Greig relied on the accuracy of Tytler's biography of Kames, which presumes to contain all the letters from Hume to Kames. This book has been largely discredited since the publication of the *Private Papers of James Boswell*. Tytler was zealously trying to make a case for his patron, and was not above using what he felt was a judicious selection to support his points. Greig's omissions correspond exactly to Tytler's in both of the letters discussed.

²⁰ *New Letters*, p. 3.

²¹ Greig, I, 2.

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and Criticism. I shall present you with a copy as soon as I come to Scotland, & hope your Curiosity as well as Friendship will make you take the pains of perusing it."²²

The previously omitted three sentences are not of an indelicate nature as were the deleted remarks in the 1737 letter, but they do reveal that Home was not above using high-pressure salesmanship in behalf of his friend:

In looking over your letters, I find one of a twelve-month Date, wherein you desire me to send down a great many Copys to Scotland. You propos'd no doubt to take the Pains of recommending them, & pushing the Sale. But to tell the truth, there is so little to be gained that way in Works as these, that I wou'd not have you take the trouble.²³

There is evidence that David did present Home with copies of Book I and Book II of the *Treatise* as he had promised and that Home read them carefully at least twice. The episode, which is recorded in Boswell's "Materials for Writing the Life of Lord Kames,"²⁴ is significant for two reasons. First, it proves that Home was thoroughly familiar with the *Treatise* soon after its publication. Secondly, it relates to a problem of interpretation which has been overlooked by scholars. Here is how Boswell tells it:

But when David Hume returned home from his travels, he had two volumes of his *Treatise of Human Nature* printed and published. He brought them to Lord Kames, and begged he would read them. My Lord told him he was quite out of the train of Metaphysics, in which he found he never got more light, and declined reading them. About a month after, David came back and begged he would read them to oblige him. Said My Lord: "I'll do anything to oblige you. But you must sit by and try to beat your Book into my head." He did so. Yet my Lord had no more than a glimmering of what was his meaning. Sometime after this, My Lord, who had a farm in the country and had got up at six in a May morning when there was nothing to do in the fields, took up David's Book, and as a proof that thoughts ripen in the mind imperceptibly, he read it to his astonishment with the clearest understanding. And he sat down and wrote Observations upon it. David, who used to come frequently to him, came soon after. "Well, David, I'll tell you News. I understand your Book quite well." He shewed him his objections, and David, who was not very ready to yield, acknowledged he was right in every one

²² *New Letters*, p. 4.

²³ *New Letters*, p. 4.

²⁴ Boswell, XV, 258ff.

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of them. He said he Never did think as David does in that *Treatise*.²⁵

There has been no problem of reliability of evidence up to this point. Hume would have no need to color letters written at the time of the actions they describe. In the Boswell "Life," however, this problem arises, especially since all commentators on Hume and Home have wholeheartedly accepted the truth of Kames's words. Kames told this story to Boswell in 1778, two years after Hume's death and almost forty years after the incident occurred. The friendship between the two had cooled over the previous several years, as we shall see. Hume had become the Great Infidel, the object of orthodoxy's hatred and fear. Is it unlikely that these and other factors might make a Chief Justice and an elder of the Church a bit hesitant about telling all? Several aspects of the story bear a second look.

It is hard to believe, first of all, that Hume had to beg Lord Kames to read the *Treatise*, when he himself had apparently been so curious about the work that he had asked David to send him a précis of it before it was completed. It is furthermore rather unlikely that a member of the Rankenian Club and a future president of the Philosophical Society would ever be "quite out of the train of Metaphysics," and refuse to read the book.

The whole incident smacks of melodrama with Kames the orthodox, but benevolent, hero and Hume, the unorthodox neophyte who concedes to superior wisdom. Kames had asked Boswell to write his life "in a flattering manner."²⁶ Boswell had certainly done his best to comply. The picture of Hume trying to beat the *Treatise* into Henry's head and of the latter's sudden epiphany verges on the comic.

And Boswell, who never read the book, is hardly the one to judge whether Kames ever thought "as David did in that *Treatise*." Indeed, Boswell's only recorded contact with the *Treatise*, three years after the session with Kames, bears unmistakable traces of My Lord's convenient latter-day judgment: "(28 July, 1781) I borrowed today out of the Advocate's Library David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, but found it so abstruse, so contrary to sound sense and reason, and so dreary in its effects upon the mind, if it had any, that I resolved to return in without reading it."²⁷

And yet the testimony of a hostile witness like Kames that he read

²⁵ Boswell, XV, 273-4.

²⁶ Boswell, X, 102.

²⁷ Boswell, XV, 15.

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the *Treatise* twice is important and certainly reliable. Two more letters from Hume to Home survive and neither of them mentions the incident which Kames describes to Boswell, although it almost certainly occurred between February and June, 1739. The letter headed "Ninewells, June 4, 1739" notes that Hume has included two essays at Home's request. These were probably early drafts of essays later to be included in the 1741 collection. Home is betraying a good deal of eagerness for one who is disenchanted with metaphysics, or else he has made marvelous strides in two or three months. David's attitude toward the poor sale of the *Treatise* is philosophical and the tone of friendship with Home is as predominant as ever:

My fondness for what I imagin'd new Discoveries made me overlook all common Rules of Prudence; & having enjoy'd the usual Satisfaction of Projectors, 'tis but just I shou'd meet with their Disappointments. However, as 'tis observ'd that with such sort of People one Project generally succeeds another, I doubt not but in a day or two I shall be as easy as ever, in hopes that Truth will prevail at last over the Indifference and Opposition of the World. You see I might at present subscribe myself Your most *humble* servant with great Propriety, but notwithstanding shall presume to call myself Your most affectionate Friend as well as humble Servant.²⁸

The last 1739 letter, headed "Ninewells, 1 July, 1729," records that Hume sent further essays to Home and that the latter sent a now unidentifiable manuscript to Hume. David's trust in his friend in Edinburgh is so strong that he sends Home papers the merit of which he himself questions. One would not put himself in such a compromising position except with one's most intimate friends. "I hope you always esteem yourself more oblig'd to me, when I send you papers I do not approve of, than when I send you those I think more tolerable; since there may be a share of Vanity in the latter Case, which can have no part in the former. I have a strong Suspicion against the present Packet."²⁹

Since Hume was in Scotland from 1729 to 1745, there is very little evidence of his relationship with Henry Home in these years, although the tone of the letters before and after this period indicates that nothing had changed. Hume was busy with his further publications, bringing out two volumes of *Essays, Moral and Political* between 1741 and 1742. The one letter from Hume to Home in this period is a critical discussion of Cicero's rhetoric, interesting mainly for its treatment of unity.

²⁸ *New Letters*, pp. 5-6.

²⁹ *New Letters*, p. 6.

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In 1745 Hume attempted to get an appointment to Edinburgh University as Professor of Ethics and Pneumatical Philosophy, a move which brought on the first public outcry against the author of the *Treatise*. The attack on Hume was made by one William Wishart, Principal of Edinburgh College, when the Town Council called in the Ministers of Edinburgh for advice on the appointment. Robert Wallace, Minister of Auld Kirk in Edinburgh, attempted to refute Wishart's charges which maligned and misrepresented Hume, but was unsuccessful and Hume did not receive the appointment.

Henry Home played a significant role during this public humiliation of his friend. Hume's letter to Home in 1745 reveals a deep gratitude for the latter's help. Indeed it reveals such a close relationship between the two that Tytler, continuing Kames's efforts to cover up his ties with Hume, does not include any of it in his *Life of Lord Kames*. To have included it would not have helped his thesis that it was "mortifying to remark, how uncertain and precarious were the prospects of this eminent man."³⁰

The letter remained unpublished until 1954. It shows that at the height of the controversy Home somehow got hold of a letter Hume had written to John Coutts, Lord Provost of Edinburgh, who had proposed him for the professorship. As a last ditch effort, Home rushed the letter into print and it appeared in the *Caledonian Mercury* and the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* on May 21, 1745 under the title, *A Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend at Edinburgh; containing some Observations on a Speciman of the Principles concerning Religion and Morality, said to be maintained in a Book lately Published, intituled A Treatise of Human Nature, &c.*³¹ After the failure of this eleventh-hour effort, Home did not desert his friend, but managed to get him a tutoring job with the Marquess of Annandale. It is from the Annandale estate, Weldehall, that Hume writes the next extant letter to Home in 1745.

Hume is already resigned about the matter, less than a month after it happened. His ability to recover from severe psychological blows and his lack of personal animosity against his detractors are admirable:

I find my affair at Edinburgh is over upon two Accounts, both because I am glad to be off with it . . . & because I find it wou'd not succeed, if I had been never so much dispos'd for it. I can now laugh at the Malice of those who intended to do me an injury, without being able to reach me.

I am sorry you shou'd have found yourself oblig'd to print

³⁰ Tytler, I, 123.

³¹ Mossner, p. 160.

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the Letter I wrote to Mr. Coutts, it being so hastily compos'd that I scarce had time to revise it. Indeed the charge was so weak, that it did not require much time to answer it, if the Matter had been to be judg'd by Reason. The Principal found himself reduc'd to this Dilemma; either to draw Heresies from my Principles by Inference and Deductions, which he knew wou'd never do with the Ministers and Town Council. Or if he made use of my Words, he must pervert them and misrepresent them in the grossest way in the World. This last Expedient he chose, with much Prudence but very little Honesty. I think Mr. Wallace's conduct has been very noble and generous; & I am much oblig'd to him.³²

The letter also includes what the editors of *New Letters* call "Hume's strongest statement concerning his friendship with Henry Home at that period."³³

It gives me great Sorrow, by the Turn this Affair has taken, that I shou'd have so little Prospect of seeing you, for a long time: But I hope we shall still preserve the same Friendship, & that no Distance of time & place shall ever be able to make us Strangers to each other. . . .³⁴

The kind Sentiments you express towards me & of which I never doubted, renew the Regret that I shou'd have so little Prospect of passing my Life with you, whom I always regarded as the best Friend, in every Respect, I ever possess, *Mais tel est notre sort.*³⁵

The Annandale affair had unfortunate consequences for Hume. The Marquess was mad and David became involved in a rather nasty business involving a melodramatic villain named Captain Vincent and a salary which Hume was never paid. Mossner gives a lively account of the affair,³⁶ including two letters from Henry Home to the advisor of the Annandales, Sir James Johnstone. It is curious that two letters from Home to Johnstone survive, while none of the many from Home to Hume survive. These two letters complement Hume's correspondence of the period in demonstrating that the friendship between the two men was mutual. "I cannot think of sacrificing my friend, even upon your account, to make him submit to dishonourable terms."³⁷

Hume left Weldehall in 1746 to become private secretary to General

³² *New Letters*, pp. 14-15.

³³ *New Letters*, p. 17.

³⁴ Between these two paragraphs, Hume received a letter from Home. The second paragraph refers to Home's remarks in that letter, which is not extant.

³⁵ *New Letters*, pp. 16-17.

³⁶ Mossner, Chapter 13, "The Unfortunate Tutor."

³⁷ Thomas Murray, *Letters of David Hume, and Extracts of Letters Referring to Him* (Edinburgh, 1841). Quoted in Mossner, p. 169.

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St. Clair. He embarked with St. Clair on an ill-fated invasion of Brittany and his next letter to Home is written from Portsmouth, July 24, 1746, just before the invasion attempt.³⁸ The letter is a fairly routine description of the military situation. The brief philosophical discussion, however, reveals that the two were still exchanging ideas.

In 1747 Hume returned to England with St. Clair by way of Cork. Two letters to Home, one in January from Cork and one in June from London, testify to his increasing uneasiness about a position in life. At age thirty-six he feels he is unable to enter a new profession and yet there have been few rewards from philosophy:

Had I any Fortune, which cou'd give me a Prospect of Leisure and Opportunitys to prosecute my historical Projects, nothing cou'd be more useful to me; and I shou'd pick up more military Knowledge, in one Campaign, by living in the General's Family & being introduc'd frequently to the Dukes, than most Officers cou'd do after many Years Service. But to what can all this serve? I am a Philosopher, & so, I suppose, must continue.³⁹

On the one hand, I consider, that I am at a critical Season in Life; & that if I return into a Solitude at present I am in danger of being left there, & of continuing a poor Philosopher for ever. On the other hand, I am not able to form any distinct Project of pushing myself in any particular Profession; the Law & Army is too late, the Church is my Aversion. A travelling Tutor some better, but not agreeable. Any Office uncertain, and precarious. Mean-while I lose my time, spend my money; fall into necessity, perhaps, & Dependence, which I have sought all my life to avoid.⁴⁰

It was not indeed a suitable time to begin to suspect the motives of a friend. But the June letter clearly reveals that Home has taken some of the ideas from the *Treatise* and incorporated them into *Essays Upon Several Subjects Concerning British Antiquities* (Edinburgh, 1747). This is the first evidence of a literary borrowing which Home was to continue on an even larger scale in *Elements of Criticism*.

Henry Home, it seems, made quite a practice of borrowing ideas from his friends to incorporate them unacknowledged in his own works. Helen Randall, in a book devoted to an exposition of Home's critical theory independent of his sources, observes how prone he was to lean on others. Commenting on the friendship between Benjamin Franklin and Home, she says:

It is hardly fortuitous that Kames should have read so soon afterwards, in 1761, a paper on evaporation, when just before his visit

³⁸ *New Letters*, pp. 18-21.

³⁹ *New Letters*, p. 23. Letter of January, 1747.

⁴⁰ *New Letters*, pp. 25-26. Letter of June, 1747.

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Franklin had been studying the subject under learned English scientists; that after meeting Franklin, who had already formed a habit of directing through correspondence the education of young women, such as Mary Stevenson, Kames began to do the same thing; that Kames started popularizing various experiments in farming only after sending to Franklin a paper on oxen, which he approved and circulated in London; that, as a matter of fact, many of Kame's writings, upon which he had been working for a long time, should have appeared in print so soon after Franklin's visit.⁴¹

It is a further testimony to David's sense of gratitude to Home and to his constitutional abhorrence of personal animosity that even in the midst of depression he treats the matter lightly: "You do me the Honour to borrow Some Principles from a certain Book. I wish they be not esteem'd too subtile and abstruse."⁴² It is significant that although Hume never again overtly referred to the borrowing habits of his friend, his only judgment of the later *Elements of Criticism* was that it was "abstruse."⁴³

It would be extremely dramatic if the extant correspondence between Hume and Home ended with this indirect accusation of plagiarism, and such is almost the case. After more than ten years of fairly regular correspondence, there are only two more short letters from Hume to Henry Home in the final twenty-eight years of Hume's life. When David leaves England in 1748 as secretary to General St. Clair's mission to the courts of Vienna and Turin, he writes to Home about plans for a new edition of the *Essays*, and for the publication of *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, which Home had dissuaded him from printing.

During the next decade, 1748 to 1758, there was no correspondence between the two because Hume was in Edinburgh most of the time. Things were beginning to get a bit uncomfortable for Henry Home. He was rising in the legal profession. He may, perhaps, have felt that his well-known friendship with the Great Infidel was a threat to his ambitions. At any rate, in 1751 he published the first full-length refutation of the *Treatise of Human Nature, Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*. Is it only coincidence that in the same year his nomination for Lord of Sessions was being considered? This is the same man who had for more than twenty years been David's closest confidante—by Hume's own admission, "my dearest friend."

⁴¹ Randall, "The Critical Theory of Lord Kames," pp. 13-14.

⁴² *New Letters*, p. 27.

⁴³ Boswell, I, 129.

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"Le bon David" reacted with characteristic magnanimity. But he certainly must have recalled how ironic had been his remarks about Cicero and Antony in a previous letter to his—prospective—lordship:

When Cicero spoke the first Phillipic Antony and he had not broken all measures with each other, but there were still some remains of a very great Intimacy & Friendship betwixt them. . . . The Divine Phillipic, as Juvenal calls it, is the second, when he gives a full loose to his Scurrillity. . . . I think the whole turn of it wou'd not now be generally admir'd.⁴⁴

Home tried to cover the insult of his attack with a rather obsequious advertisement: "The figure which this author makes in the learned world, is too considerable to admit of his being passed over in silence."⁴⁵ But if Home thought that this "refutation" would ingratiate him with Edinburgh orthodoxy, the actual outcome must have pained him. Hume develops the great irony in a letter to Michael Ramsay:

Have you seen our Friend Harry's Essays? They are well wrote, and are an unusual instance of an obliging method of answering a Book. Philosophers must judge of the question, but the Clergy have already decided it, and say he is as bad as me. Nay some affirm him to be worse, as much as a treacherous Friend is worse than as open Enemy. . . . He is surely the strangest man in the world?⁴⁶

Home received his judgeship, becoming Lord Kames in 1752. But the furor over the *Essays* continued. In 1753 a retired Army chaplain, Rev. George Anderson, wrote a pamphlet entitled *An Estimate of the Profit and Loss of Religion, Personally and publicly stated: Illustrated with Reference to Essays on Morality and Natural Religion*, which attacked Kames under the name of "Sopho" and "his assistant, David Hume, Esq."—a neat reversal! Hume described the author as "the godly, spiteful, pious, splenetic, charitable, unrelenting, meek, persecuting, Christian, inhuman, peacemaking, furious Anderson, (who) is at present hot in pursuit of Lord Kames."⁴⁷

In 1754 another pamphlet, written by Rev. John Bonar, a Highflying clergyman, continued the unwarranted ranting against Kames. It was entitled *An Analysis of the Moral and Religious Sentiments contained in the Writings of Sopho and David Hume, Esq.: Addressed to the Consideration of the Reverend and Honourable Members of the General Assembly of The Church of Scotland*. Hugh Blair, a close friend of

⁴⁴ *New Letters*, p. 9.

⁴⁵ Mossner, p. 295.

⁴⁶ Greig, I, 162.

⁴⁷ Mossner, p. 340.

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Hume, came to the defense of Kames with a third pamphlet in June, 1755, just before the Assembly session was to debate the order for excommunication of Kames and Hume. It was entitled *Observations Upon a Pamphlet, intituled "An Analysis of the Moral and Religious Sentiments &c."*

Far from refuting Hume, Henry Home had in fact adopted many of his free-thinking principles and it was particularly Home's denial of the liberty of human nature that prompted these attacks. A major crisis developed in the Assembly pitting for one last effort the moderate liberals against the Highflying conservatives. Moderate thinking prevailed over the conservative demands for excommunication. Robert Wallace, who had once before defended Hume when he was a candidate for a professorship, wrote the majority opinion in favor of enlightenment. It was a decision which marked the end of conservative control in the Assembly.⁴⁸

Although some critics maintain that there was an open break between Hume and Kames in the 1750s, the evidence does not support this conclusion. Indeed, during Hume's residence in Edinburgh in this period he may have lived with Home.⁴⁹ And the next major incident involving the two reveals "le bon David" forgetting this breach of friendship and coming to Home's defence.

The Philosophical Society of Edinburgh had been formed in 1731. Henry Home was an original member and became president in 1769. In 1751 Hume was elected Joint Secretary. The Society published a collection of papers under the title of *Essays and observations, Physical and Literary, read before a Society in Edinburgh and published by them* (1754) with Hume as co-editor. The first article, "Of the Laws of Motion" was by Kames. Its anti-Newtonian point of view was answered by the second article, "Some Remarks on the Laws of Motion, and the Inertia of Matter," by John Stewart, Professor of Natural Philosophy at Edinburgh University. Apparently Hume had approved Stewart's manuscript, but just before the book went to the printers Stewart managed to make certain changes in it which turned it into a personal attack on Kames and Hume. David's letter to Stewart in 1754 is one of the best statements of his philosophy of life and of his unwillingness to take small minds too seriously:

I am so great a Lover of Peace, that I am resolv'd to drop this Matter altogether, & not to insert a Syllable in the Preface, which

⁴⁸ See Mossner's Chapter 25, "Drum Ecclesiastic," for a fuller discussion.

⁴⁹ Mossner, p. 247.

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can have a Reference to your Essay. The Truth is, I cou'd take no Revenge, but such a one as wou'd have been a great deal too cruel, & much exceeding the Offence. For tho' most Authors think, that a contemptuous manner of treating their Writings, is but slightly reveng'd by hurting the personal Character & the Honour of their Antagonists, I am very far from that Opinion. Besides I am as certain as I can be of anything (and I am not such a Sceptic, as you may, perhaps, imagine) that your inserting such remarkable Alterations in the printed Copy proceeded entirely from Precipitancy & Passion, not from any formed Intention of deceiving the Society. I wou'd not take advantage of such an Incident to throw a Slur on a man of Merit, whom I esteem, tho' I might have reason to complain of him. . . .

As to your Situation with regard to Lord Kames, I am not so good a Judge. I only think, that you had so much the better of the Argument, that you ought, upon that Account, to have been the more reserv'd in your Expressions. All Raillery ought to be avoided in philosophical Argument; both because it is unphilosophical, and because it cannot but be offensive, let it be ever so gentle. What then must we think with regard to so many Insinuations of Irreligion, to which Lord Kames's Paper gave not the least Occasion? This Spirit of the Inquisitor is in you the Effect of Passion, & what a cool Moment wou'd easily correct. But where it predominates in the Character, what Ravages has it committed on Reason, Virtue, Truth, Liberty, & every thing, that is valuable among Mankind.⁵⁰

It was during the 1750's that Hume began to reap some reward for his literary labors. His *Essays* were selling so well that another four-volume collection was published between 1753 and 1756. It contains all his essays up to that time except for the *Treatise*. And in 1754 he began his *History of Great Britain*, which, while not an immediate success, certainly made him financially independent. In 1757 he published *Four Dissertations*, which contains his essays on tragedy and on the standard of taste.

Hume's letter to Kames in 1758,⁵¹ the last extant correspondence between the two, is a commentary on some economics essays of Josiah Tucker which Kames had sent to him. The letter does not, as Miss Randall feels,⁵² reveal a cooling of the Hume-Home relationship. Hume's use of "My Lord" and "your Lordship" are only marks of his customary politeness, no cooler than his respectful "dear Sir" in other letters.

Not until the 1760's is there real evidence that Hume's friendship

⁵⁰ Greig, I, 185-86.

⁵¹ Greig, I, 270-72.

⁵² Randall, "The Critical Theory of Lord Kames," p. 17.

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toward Kames had cooled. Kames's *Elements of Criticism* appeared in 1762 and revealed a good deal more of the "borrowing"—again acknowledged—which Hume has previously commented upon. From this time on, though the two remained acquaintances, there was never the close friendship of former years.

Though sometimes called a quarrel, there is no evidence that requires it to be called more than a loss of intimacy. The two men always remained on speaking terms and were not infrequently seen together at social affairs. For the last six or seven years of Hume's life, their relations must have mended somewhat, since on several occasions they were one another's guests. Be that as it may, the complete understanding and deep intimacy of the early years had given way to a certain coldness and perhaps even bitterness. The occasion of the estrangement is unknown.⁵³

I think it more than a coincidence that the break-up came so soon after the publication of *Elements of Criticism*.

Hume, as I say, did not break completely with Kames. In fact he even persuaded his own publisher, Andrew Millar, to bring out the first edition of *Elements of Criticism* in 1762, a paradox which only the character of Hume can explain. Hume left for France shortly thereafter and was on the continent as secretary to the British Ambassador in Paris from 1763 to 1766. There was no correspondence with Kames during this period.

In 1764 Hume wrote to Hugh Blair from Paris about Voltaire's review of *Elements* in the *Gazette littéraire*.⁵⁴ One can appreciate the tone of the review from Voltaire's misspelling of Kames's name ("Makaimés") and from his continual reference to the gentleman as "ce monsieur Kaimes." Incidentally, Voltaire's feelings about *Elements of Criticism* were confirmed when Boswell visited him in 1764. "I mentioned the severe Criticism which the Gazette Literaire has given upon Lord Kames's *Elements*. I imagined it to be done by Voltaire, but would not ask him. [The review had been written anonymously.] He repeated to me several of the *bon mots* in it, with an air that confirmed me in my idea of his having written this Criticism. He called My Lord always *Ce Monsieur Kames*."⁵⁵

Hume's letter to Blair, which prompted Kames to soften his references to Voltaire's *Henriade* in subsequent editions of *Elements*, reveals an ambivalence of feelings about his former friend:

⁵³ Mossner, p. 410.

⁵⁴ *Gazette littéraire de l'Europe*, I (1764), 92-100.

⁵⁵ Boswell, IV, 130.

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Our Friend, I mean, your Friend, Lord Kaims had much provok'd Voltaire who never forgives, & never thinks any Enemy below his notice. He has accordingly sent to the *Gazette Literaire* an article with regard to the *Elements of Criticism*, which turns that Book extremely into Ridicule, with a good deal of wit. I tryd to have it suppressed before it was printed; but the Authors of that Gazette told me, that they durst neither suppress nor alter any thing that came from Voltaire. I suppose His Lordship holds that satiric Wit as cheap as he does all the rest of the human Race, and will not be in the least mortify'd by his Censure.⁵⁶

The coolness between the two men seems to have been at least as much due to Lord Kames's personality as to David's pique. Hume described Kames's volatile personality to Boswell in 1762: "He is a man very apt to change his favourites. He is positive in opinion. He is fond of young people, of instructing them and dictating to them; but whenever they come up and have a mind of their own, he quarrels with them."⁵⁷ And Adam Smith tells Boswell what Hume thought of Kames: "When one says of another man that he is the most arrogant man in the world, it is meant only to say that he is very arrogant. But when one says it of Lord Kames, it is an absolute truth."⁵⁸

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⁵⁶ Greig, I, p. 436.

⁵⁷ Boswell, I, 129.

⁵⁸ Boswell, XV, 12.