SOME PROBLEMS IN HUME'S

MORAL PHILOSOPHY

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of three main aspects of Hume's moral philosophy: the distinction between the natural and artificial virtues, the operation of sympathy, and the notion of the general point of view. It begins with an examination of Hume's concept of a virtue, concluding that a virtue is to be analyzed as a disposition to have certain kinds of motives. The natural virtues and the artificial virtues are then examined separately, the motives underlying both are analyzed, and it is decided that these motives must be described in terms of purposes. Although the motives underlying the natural virtues are seen to fulfill two criteria that Hume sets forth, the motives underlying the artificial virtues are seen to meet neither. The artificial virtues are shown to be distinct virtues, rather than redirected natural virtues.

The chapter on sympathy outlines the mechanics of this operation with reference to four different classes of virtues. It also deals with a disagreement between Ingemar Hendenius and Pall Ardal, two commentators on Hume's moral philosophy, as to whether the operation of sympathy is a necessary condition of all moral evaluation. It is argued that if the operation of sympathy is considered without reference to the taking of a general point of view, Hendenius' argument appears to be valid, but that in the end Ardal is actually correct. The notion of a general point of view is then analyzed, is shown to be a necessary condition of all moral evaluation,

and is then related to the distinction between the natural
and the artificial virtues. It is finally concluded that
the concept of an artificial virtue, the operation of sym-
pathy and the notion of a general point of view between
them give an account of the requirements for being a moral
agent.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The work that follows is an examination of three different aspects of Hume's moral philosophy: the notion of a moral virtue and the distinction between natural and artificial moral virtues; the concept of the operation of sympathy; and the doctrine of the general point of view. In concentrating on these topics I am departing somewhat from the usual area of study of Hume's moral theory, but I would justify this departure on the grounds that the areas I have concentrated on are of importance not only for a complete understanding of Hume's theory, but also for moral theory in general, and have been unjustly neglected.

A good deal of what I say in this thesis could be regarded as a sequal to a recent book published on Hume's moral theory: Pall S. Ardal's Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise. This excellent book is an account of the psychological elements underlying moral evaluation, and in particular, of the role of the passions in moral evaluation. I refer to this work often, with occasional disagreements, and have adopted a large part of the analysis presented in it as a basis for my discussion of the three topics mentioned above, and of the relationships between them. What I have written could be regarded as a middle course between Ardal's work and the topics most often considered with reference to Hume; that is, a middle course between a discussion of Hume's psychology and a discussion of such technical points in Hume as the fact-value distinction, or whether he should be called a subjectivist or a utilitarian. What I have

done is consider the psychological elements which appear to
be a central part of Hume's account of morality, and examine
his account of morality in light of these elements, choosing
for my examination the three concepts which appear to me to
constitute between them the essential elements of Hume's ac-
count. Most other points which might be considered, and are
usually considered, are interesting in themselves, but as a
ground for understanding the theory which Hume presents,
they are secondary.

It has, of course, been frequently noted that Hume's
account of morality is to be regarded more as descriptive
than prescriptive. Hume conceives his task to be to give an
account of how people actually do make moral evaluations, and
of the elements which enter into such evaluations, rather
than to give an account of how they should do so. He thus
does not appear to be laying down conditions which are nec-
essary to moral evalution, with the intention of instructing
his readers on how to go about this very human enterprize.
He seems rather to regard it as obvious that this enterprize
has been going on for a long period of time, and that the
task of the philosopher is at most to lay bare the presuppo-
sitions of the enterprize, as it has been engaged in.

> But nature may also be opposed to rare and unusual;
> and in this sense of the word, which is the common
> one, there may often arise disputes concerning what
> is natural or unnatural.... We may only affirm on
> this head, that if ever there was anything, which
> cou'd be call'd natural in this sense, the sentiments
> of morality certainly may; since there never was any
> nation of the world, nor any single person in any na-
> tion, who was utterly deprived of them, and who never,
> in any instance, shew'd the least approbation or
> dislike of manners. These sentiments are so rooted
> in our constitution or temper, that without utterly
> confounding the human mind by disease or madness, 'tis
> impossible to extirpate and destroy them.   (T.474)

there is just so much vice or virtue in any char-
acter, as every one places in it, and...'tis impos-
sible in this particular we can ever be mistaken.
                                                (T.547)

The general opinion of mankind has some authority
in all cases; but in this of morals 'tis perfectly
infallible.   (T.552)

Notwithstanding the nature of the philosopher's task, as

Hume conceives it -- that of introducing the experimental

method of reasoning into moral subjects, his account does

include some features of moral evaluation which he clearly

regards as necessary conditions of moral, in contrast to

non-moral, evaluation, and so some of his points could be

regarded as logical. I have in mind here such claims as

that the operation of sympathy and the taking of a general

point of view are necessary conditions of _moral_ evaluation.

Although there is some possibility that this is a causal

claim and thus merely a description of the normal process

of events, it makes more sense if regarded as a logical

claim, distinguishing moral from non-moral evaluation. Even

so, such logical elements are drawn from a claimed observa-

tion of the common opinion in the area of morality.

Hume's account of morality is interesting and worth

considering because, for one thing, he places at the center

of morality a certain kind of psychological element: dis-

positions, and thus allows more room in morality for things

important to it other than talk of rules and actions. The

moral virtues which are analyzable as dispositions to have

certain sort of motives make up this central portion of

morality, since it is in reference to the virtues which a

man possesses or fails to possess that he is the object of

moral approval or disapproval, and it is these virtues which

are the object of moral evaluation. Thus the virtues are of
essential importance whether one considers morality from the
point of view of the agent, or from the point of view of the
observer, who is engaged in moral evaluation. This emphasis
of dispositions in Hume's theory means that more attention is
paid to a man's character, in the sense of his normal or nat-
ural, perhaps even unreflective, motives for acting, than on
his adherence to rules. This position is, obviously, closer
to Aristotle's than to Kant's. One might express this by say-
ing that, to Hume, what is primarily important in morality is
what sort of person a man is, and it is primarily as an ex-
pression of character that his .actions matter. It is on the
basis of what sort of person he is, that his actions are eval-
uated, and not on the basis of his actions that a man is eval-
uated. This is putting the point more simply than it should
be put, but this is the general tendency of Hume's account.

To say that Hume's account de-emphasizes the notions
of rules is not to claim that Hume does not regard rules as
being of any importance. His distinction between the natural
and artificial virtues makes it quite clear that he believes
rules to be of importance for certain aspects of morality,
exemplified by the artificial virtues, and not for others,
basically exemplified by the natural virtues. Since the
natural virtues could be regarded as the foundation of morality,
and the artificial virtues as a sophistication or elaboration
of this foundation due to certain inconveniences in the opera-
tion of the natural virtues, one could claim that rules play
no role in the basis of morality, although they play an essen-
tial role in a civilized moral attitude. The role that rules
do play, however, even in the area of the artificial virtues,

is nowhere nearly as significant as the role which rules would play in a more Kantian theory. Although the artificial virtues could not exist without the prior existence of certain rules or conventions, and the motives underlying such virtues include an essential reference to such rules, a man is not judged, in Humean terms, on how well he conforms to the rules, or on how significant the concept of duty is to his motives. The notion of doing one's duty for its own sake, or following rules for their own sake, is essentially foreign to Hume's account.

The notion of the general point of view presents another aspect of the role of rules or conventions in Hume's moral theory, but like the role of artificial virtues, it must be regarded as secondary to the basic theory and a device for solving problems which arise in the natural or unsophisticated arousal of moral feelings. Although the taking of such a point of view becomes, for Hume, a necessary condition of truly moral evaluation, its importance in the theory is second to that of the arousal of the appropriate feelings. This secondary role of rules or conventions to feelings is typical of Hume's approach to moral theory, and is presumably the reason why he has often been regarded as a subjectivist.

Another philosophically interesting feature of Hume's account of morality is the notion of a continuity between moral and other sorts of evaluation. Like Aristotle, and unlike Kant, Hume was very impressed by the continuity of approval between moral and non-moral contexts. He did not appear to think that there was an ultimate difference between these kinds of approval, although some difference was allowed for by the notion of the general point of view, and he argued that some bases on which

this distinction had formerly been made were clearly specious.
Thus he gave an account of moral approval in the context of
approval in general, and frequently drew analogies between
moral and other sorts of approval, such as aesthetic. This
is important since it allows one to view morality not as a
separate part of one's existence, or a feature of life which
is opposed to, or a source of possible conflict with, the
other features, but rather as an intrinsic part, not so much
different from other features, as continuous with these other
features. This is not to suggest that conflicts are not pos-
sible, but just that such conflicts are no different than any
other sorts of conflicts people have between different kinds
of desires or motives. Morality is not some force which fights
against, or controls a man's baser instincts; it is just as
much natural to man as any other sorts of motives or desires,
and is homogeneous with these other sorts of motives or desires.
Thus, Hume's theory looks at morality in the light of the rest
of man's characteristics, and fits it in among them. Moral
approval or disapproval is just another kind of approval or
disapproval, and not much different from the other kinds.

The theory about the operation of sympathy is an im-
portant part of the continuity of moral life with the rest of
life. It is the operation of sympathy that allows one's nat-
ural concern for, and interest in, the well-being of other
people, to be extended beyond one's immediate circle of rela-
tions and friends. Thus, although in a moral judgment one
must extend oneself beyond this immediate circle, the opera-
tion of sympathy allows that the factors which come into play
are no different than the factors which concern one in one's
immediate circle. Thus the operation of sympathy allows one

to extend one's feelings of benevolence beyond those people towards whom they are normally directed, for example, and allows one to disapprove morally of characters who have caused pain to strangers, as well as to people for whom one has a natural concern. The operation of sympathy, in extending one's interests beyond one's immediate circle, or sphere of interest, allows one to see that to become a moral agent is not to move into another realm, different from the area in which one's natural limited benevolence and concern operates, but is rather to extend this realm to include a wider range of people.

These features of Hume's moral theory then; the putting of a psychological element at the centre of morality, the de-emphasizing of the role of rules in morality, and the view that moral and non-moral life and moral and non-moral approval are continuous entities, make it, I think, both philosophically interesting and worth considering as saying something significant about morality which can be missed in concentrating too strongly on the notion of duty and on the fact-value distinction.

It is customary to defend one's choice of either the Treatise or the Enquiry as the main subject of one's study, when considering Hume's moral theory. My own defense might be considered rather weak: I have always found the account given in the Treatise more interesting, and so decided to concentrate on it. In point of fact, the notions of sympathy and the general point of view are more fully accounted for in that work, and the distinction between the natural and artificial virtues is only there made explicitly. Given my view that these constitute important elements in understand-

ing Hume's theory, my choice of source appears inevitable.

The quotations from the <u>Treatise</u> and the <u>Enquiry</u> are taken from the Selby-Bigge editions of 1964 and 1963 respectively of these two works, and the page references given refer to these editions.

CHAPTER 2

The Moral Virtues

The basic concept in Hume's account of morals is that
of a moral virtue. The virtues are, as the word might suggest,
those characteristics of men which are the objects of moral
approval or disapproval. Within the class of virtues, Hume
makes a distinction between those which he calls "natural",
and others which he calls "artificial". This distinction
between the natural and the artificial virtues is of crucial
importance in Hume's moral theory, and most of the other
points that I will be considering in this thesis follow from
this distinction, and from the notion of an artificial virtue.
I shall thus spend some time discussing virtues in general,
and the artificial virtues in particular.

The first point, then, is to become clear about what
Hume means when he talks about virtues. If we start with the
premise that the virtues are those characteristics of men
which are subject to moral approval or disapproval, it ap-
pears that the virtues are to be analyzed in terms of motives.

> 'Tis evident, that when we praise any actions, we
> regard only the motives that produced them, and
> consider the actions as signs or indications of
> certain principles in the mind or temper.   (T.477)

The objects of moral approval or disapproval are thus motives,
rather than actions. However, it is not just any particular
motive that is praised or blamed, and thus counted as a vir-
tue or vice.

> If any action be either virtuous or vicious, 'tis
> only as a sign of some quality or character. It
> must depend upon durable principles in the mind,
> which extend over the whole conduct, and enter into
> the personal character. Actions themselves, not

proceeding from any constant principle, have no in-
fluence on love or hatred, pride or humility; and
consequently are never consider'd in morality.   (T.575)

The relevant motives are thus "constant principles", and not

particular motives. In general, I would prefer to call them

dispositions, and thus claim that the virtues and vices are

dispositions to have certain sorts of motives. A man would

then be said to have the virtue of benevolence if he had a

disposition to have the sorts of motives one would character-

ize as benevolent, and not if he merely on one or a few occa-

sions had such motives.

Although such dispositions are the basis of moral

judgments, in the sense that they form the virtues and vices

which are the objects of moral approval or disapproval, they

cannot themselves include a reference to moral approval or

disapproval. Hume is quite clear and emphatic on this point.

no action can be virtuous, or morally good, unless
there be in human nature some motive to produce it,
distinct from the sense of its morality.   (T.479)

and;

Wherein consists this honesty and justice, which
you find in restoring a loan, and abstaining from
the property of others? It does not surely lie in
the external action. It must, therefore, be plac'd
in the motive, from which the external action is
deriv'd. This motive can never be a regard to the
honesty of the action. For 'tis a plain fallacy to
say, that a virtuous motive is requisite to render
an action honest, and at the same time that a regard
to the honesty is the motive of the action. We can
never have a regard to the virtue of an action, un-
less the action be antecedently virtuous. No action
can be virtuous, but so far as it proceeds from a
virtuous motive. A virtuous motive, therefore, must
precede the regard to the virtue; and 'tis impossible,
that the virtuous motive and the regard to the virtue
can be the same.   (T.480)

This does not mean that it is impossible to act from a motive

which involves the recognition of the moral worth of the plan

of action, but rather, that first of all, such a motive is

impossible unless there is an antecedent motive for perform-
ing such actions, and second, that acting from such a motive
is not characteristic of a virtue. Hume argues that:

> tho', on some occasions, a person may perform an
> action merely out of regard to its moral obligation,
> yet this still presupposes in human nature some
> distinct principles, which are capable of producing
> the action, and whose moral beauty renders the ac-
> tion meritorious.   (T.479)

On the same page he appears to suggest that a person acting
from such a "second order" motive is not really a suitable
object for moral approval:

> A man that really feels no gratitude in his temper,
> is still pleas'd to perform grateful actions, and
> thinks he has, by that means, fulfill'd his duty.
>   (T.479 italics mine)

It thus appears that a virtue can be characterized as a dis-
position to have motives of a certain type, which motives do
not involve a reference to the moral value of the action to
be performed, or to the moral value of acting from such a
motive.

This characterization is constructed from various
points that Hume makes about virtues and moral evaluation.
Unfortunately, there is some conflict between my character-
ization, and other points which Hume makes on the subject
of moral virtues, which can be brought out by discussing his
refusal to make a distinction between moral virtues and nat-
ural abilities. This refusal arises from the argument that
moral virtues and vices are to be identified not by reference
to their internal characteristics, but by reference to the
feelings of moral approval which they arouse in the observer.
The first problem in dealing with this argument is therefore
to understand what Hume means by the feelings of moral ap-
proval and disapproval. This is not as easy as it might

first appear.

The only thing that is really clear is that feelings
of moral approval are a species of pleasure, and of moral
disapproval, a species of pain.

> Every quality of mind is denominated virtuous,
> which gives pleasure by the mere survey; as
> every quality, which produces pain, is call'd
> vicious. This pleasure and this pain may arise
> from four different sources. For we reap a
> pleasure from the view of a character, which is
> naturally fitted to be useful to others, or to
> the person himself, or which is agreeable to
> others, or to the person himself.   (T.591)

> These moral distinctions arise from the natural
> distinctions of pain and pleasure; and when we
> receive those feelings from the general consid-
> eration of any quality or character, we denominate
> it vicious or virtuous.   (T.608)

At first the reader is led to believe that the feelings of
moral approval and disapproval are peculiar kinds of pleas-
ure and pain, and can, in a sense, be identified phenomenol-
ogically, and distinguished from other feelings of pleasure
and pain.

> For, first, 'tis evident, that under the term
> pleasure, we comprehend sensations, which are
> very different from each other, and which have
> only such a distinct resemblance as is requi-
> site to make them be express'd by the same ab-
> stract term.... Nor is every sentiment of pleas-
> ure or pain, which arises from characters and
> actions, of that peculiar kind, which makes us
> praise or condemn.   (T.472)

The position expressed in this passage, that feelings of
moral approval and disapproval are distinguishable from and
different than other feelings of pleasure or pain, appears,
at least to this reader, to be the one presupposed by large
portions of Hume's moral theory. However, it does seem to
be abandoned by Hume at at least one point.

> It may, indeed, be pretended, that the sentiment
> of approbation, which those qualities [the natural

> abilities] produce, besides its being _inferior_,
> is also somewhat _different_ from that, which at-
> tends the other virtues. But this, in my opin-
> ion, is not a sufficient reason for excluding
> them from the catalogue of virtues. Each of the
> virtues, even benevolence, justice, gratitude,
> integrity, excites a different sentiment or feel-
> ing in the spectator.   (T.607)

> All the sentiments of approbation, which attend
> any particular species of objects, have a great
> resemblance to each other, tho' derived from dif-
> ferent sources.   (T.617)

Unless every feeling of pleasure or pain is to be
identified with moral approval or disapproval, a position
that I do not believe that Hume espouses (although certain
passages might lead one to this conclusion), I can only
derive two consistent positions from the above series of
passages. Either all qualities of mind produce those feel-
ings identified as moral approval or disapproval, a class
of differing but still identifiably similar feelings, and
thus all qualities of mind are virtues or vices; or, al-
though the various virtues or vices produce different feel-
ings of pleasure or pain, those qualities of mind called
virtues or vices produce feelings of pleasure or pain suffi-
ciently alike to one another and different from the feelings
of pleasure or pain produced by other qualities of mind that
they can be distinguished on these grounds. In the latter
case, Hume could then argue that the natural abilities, for
example, produce in the spectator feelings of pleasure or
pain similar to those produced by the moral virtues, and
dissimilar to those produced by other qualities of the mind.
It is not clear to me which position Hume actually holds in
this section, but my general impression is that the former
is more likely. The latter position presents problems of
phenomenological identification of feelings which are almost

insurmountable. It also suggests that there are some qual-
ities of mind which Hume would not consider to be virtues
or vices. Given the prodigious list of characteristics Hume
classifies as virtues (industry, perseverance, patience,
activity, vigilance, application, constancy, temperance;
(T.610/611), I think this is unlikely. At the very least,
I cannot imagine a quality of mind which would be sufficiently
unlike these as not to be called a moral virtue.

There are thus two identifiable positions in Hume's
writings about the nature of the moral virtues and vices,
and how they are to be identified. The first is that moral
virtues and vices are distinguished by the peculiar feelings
of pleasure and pain which they produce in the observer.
The second is that all qualities of mind are classifiable
as virtues and vices, since they all produce feelings of
pleasure and pain which are different from one another, but
yet sufficiently alike to be classified as virtues and vices.
In both of the cases, the virtues and vices are identified
by the feelings produced in the spectator rather than by the
internal characteristics which they share, but the first case
suggests the possibility that perhaps not all qualities of
mind are virtues and vices, while the second case appears to
rule this possibility out. If the second position is Hume's,
there seems very little point in his arguing that virtues
and vices are identified by the feelings of moral approbation
and disapprobation which they arouse in the observer, since
this line of argument would appear to be of value only if
there were a distinction to be made between qualities of mind
which are, and qualities which are not, virtues and vices.
The peculiar feelings of pleasure and pain which are identified

with moral approval and disapproval, since they differ according to the quality being observed, could be peculiar only in the sense that they are aroused by qualities of mind, and thus feelings of moral approval or disapproval could be identified as being those which are aroused by the observation of qualities of mind. This position would still allow Hume to argue that the feelings of pleasure and pain indicative of moral approval or disapproval are phenomenologically different from the feelings of pleasure and pain aroused by other activities than observing qualities of mind, or by the observation of things other than qualities of mind, such as works of art. However, this would not be important for distinguishing moral virtues and vices since they can be distinguished as being any qualities of mind capable of arousing pleasure or pain in the observer.

I have taken the time to distinguish these two separate positions for two reasons. The first is that I think they are both used by Hume in his rejection of the distinction between natural abilities and moral virtues. The second is to consider whether my own characterization of the moral virtues fits in better with one rather than the other. It will be remembered that I characterized the moral virtues and vices as being dispositions to have certain kinds of motives, these motives not including any reference to the moral value of the action to be performed. Such dispositions are quite clearly classifiable as qualities of mind, so that they would be consistent with either of Hume's identified positions in that regard. It is also not impossible that such dispositions could arouse, and be the only qualities of mind which did arouse, the peculiar feelings of moral approval or disapproval. However, this

would be a very difficult point to establish, since there seems to be no logical connection between being such a disposition and arousing such feelings. This connection would then have to be established empirically, and although Hume does appeal to introspection at many points in his theory, this is rather a large point to establish by so notoriously difficult a process as introspection. Thus, although there is nothing inconsistent about conflating my characterization of moral virtues or vices with Hume's first possible position of identifying virtues and vices, to do so would raise a number of difficult problems.

Hume's second possible position is that all qualities of mind are identifiable as virtues or vices, since they all arouse feelings of pleasure or pain which are sufficiently alike to allow them to be classified together in this fashion. This would be inconsistent with my characterization, since all qualities of mind are not dispositions to have certain sorts of motives; only a small number of qualities of mind fit that criterion. However, it would be possible to qualify the second position I have attributed to Hume, and say that virtues and vices are those qualities of mind (which are dispositions to have certain sorts of motives) which arouse feelings of pleasure and pain in the observer. To qualify the position in this way might rule out some of the possible qualities of mind which Hume would include among the virtues and vices, but I do not myself regard this as a serious disadvantage, since the list seems unnecessarily broad in some aspects. It would at the same time make coherent Hume's claim that it is motives which are the object of moral approval and disapproval. I thus think this qualification would

be a fair representation of Hume's actual position on the
identification of moral virtues and vices, as well as being
consistent with my own characterization of these virtues and
vices as dispositions to have certain motives. If we adopt
this position we are, however, still left with the problem
of what to make of Hume's claim that the feelings aroused
by moral virtues and vices are peculiar kinds of pleasure
and pain, and that the moral virtues and vices are to be
identified by means of these peculiar kinds of pleasure and
pain. The best I can do is suggest that Hume meant that
those qualities of mind which fit the criteria for moral vir-
tues and vices do, as a matter of fact, arouse the appropriate
distinctive feelings, and that the problem of proving this
point was just not considered in any detail.

Having made this point, it is now time to consider
Hume's rejection of the distinction between natural abili-
ties and moral virtues. Hume uses a number of different
arguments to reject the distinction. Perhaps it is best to
begin with what he considers to be the reason why the distinc-
tion was made in the first place. The origin of the distinc-
tion between moral virtues and natural abilities, Hume claims,
lies in the distinction between voluntary and involuntary
properties of men.

> "Men have observ'd, that tho' natural abilities and
> moral qualities be in the main on the same footing,
> there is, however, this difference betwixt them, that
> the former are almost invariable by any art or industry;
> while the latter, or at least, the actions, that proceed
> from them, may be chang'd by the motives of rewards
> and punishments, praise and blame."   (T.609)

However, he does not regard the voluntary-involuntary distinc-
tion as relevant in the area of morality, on two important
but different grounds. First, he argues

"that many of those qualities, which all moralists,
especially the antients, comprehend under the title
of moral virtues, are equally involuntary and neces-
sary, with the qualities of the judgment and imagina-
tion."   (T.603)

This might be regarded as an argument from precedent, which

might be persuasive, but not necessarily compelling. It is,

however, in line with Hume's empirical approach to morals,

his purpose being to describe what is included in morality,

rather than to prescribe what ought to be included in morality.

His further comment, that

"as men, in common life and conversation, do not
carry those ends in view, but naturally praise or
blame whatever pleases or displeases them, they do
not seem much to regard this distinction, but con-
sider prudence under the character of virtue as
well as benevolence, and penetration as well as
justice."   (T.609)

is part of the same argument.

The second argument, however, supplies a reason for

not making the distinction.

"I wou'd have any one give me a reason, why vir-
tue and vice may not be involuntary, as well as
beauty and deformity. These moral distinctions
arise from the natural distinctions of pain and
pleasure; and when we receive those feelings from
the general consideration of any quality or char-
acter, we denominate it vicious or virtuous. Now
I believe no one will assert, that a quality can
never produce pleasure or pain to the person who
considers it, unless it be perfectly voluntary in
the person who possesses it."   (T.608)

In other words, Hume is here arguing that the distinction

between qualities which are regarded as virtues or vices

and qualities which are not, is made on the basis of whether

or not they produce in the observer the feelings of pleasure

and pain which are called moral approval and disapproval.

It is not made on the basis of a distinction between volun-

tary and involuntary qualities. If we accept Hume's position

here on the distinction between virtues and vices, and

non-moral qualities, which is the first position outlined
in the previous section, there are several ways of criticiz-
ing his conclusion. One is to argue that involuntary qual-
ities never arouse the distinctive feelings of moral approval
or disapproval. At least one critic of Hume, Pall Ardal,
considers that this line of argument is not open to us, or,
at the least, would be unsuccessful if pursued. Ardal argues
that

> "According to Hume, and in this I think he is right,
> we cannot choose to evaluate in one way rather than
> another, although we may choose to use evaluative
> language for the purpose of encouraging certain be-
> haviour and discouraging other behaviour."[1]

That is, the production of feelings of moral approval or dis-
approval is independent of whether or not we regard the quality
in question as involuntary. The most we can do is to choose
not to use evaluative language, or not to praise and blame,
if we consider the quality involuntary, on the grounds, pre-
sumably, of futility. Ardal also argues, to support the
claim that we do, in some cases, morally disapprove of a per-
son in reference to some involuntary quality which he has:

> "The trouble....is that the really hardened criminal,
> the person who is beyond redemption, does no more
> respond to threats and encouragement than the addict."[2]

The argument here is that since we disapprove morally of the
really hardened criminal, whose vice is involuntary, in the
sense that it is beyond redemption, we clearly do not restrict
moral approval or disapproval to voluntary characteristics.
On these grounds then, it appears that if we accept that vir-
tues and vices are distinguished from other qualities on the

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[1] Ardal, Pall, *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1966. p. 160.

[2] Ibid., p. 160.

basis of their ability to arouse particular feelings, then whether or not these qualities are voluntary is irrelevant.

I think, however, that more can be said on this topic than either Hume or Ardal have admitted. The source of moral approbation according to Hume is the agreeableness or usefulness of the quality in question:

> Every quality of the mind is denominated virtuous, which gives pleasure by the mere survey; as every quality, which produces pain, is call'd vicious. This pleasure and this pain may arise from four different sources. For we reap a pleasure from the view of a character, which is naturally fitted to be useful to others, or to the person himself, or which is agreeable to others, or to the person himself. (T.591)

It is, however, according to the position I believe Hume is using as the basis of his argument here, a particular <u>kind</u> of pleasure which must be given by these qualities, and not just pleasure in general, before the quality is denominated virtuous.

> For, <u>first</u>, 'tis evident, that under the term <u>pleasure</u>, we comprehend sensations, which are very different from each other, and which have only such a distinct resemblance as is requisite to make them be express'd by the same abstract term.... Nor is every sentiment of pleasure or pain, which arises from characters and actions, of that <u>peculiar</u> kind, which makes us praise or condemn. (T.472)

Hume's position is that it is this <u>peculiar</u> kind of sentiment which can be aroused by the consideration of involuntary qualities. This position is an empirical one, which presumably could only be supported or refuted by some sort of empirical evidence. Hume's usual source of such evidence is introspection, about which argument is virtually impossible. Ardal attempts, in the quotation given above, to present empirical evidence of a rather more arguable nature, when he presents the case of the hardened criminal. Surely, however,

what is relevant about the hardened criminal is not that we
do not believe that he could reform now, but that we believe
that his situation is the result of certain choices which he
made in the past, and our moral disapproval is based on the
belief that he _voluntarily_ chose the wrong thing at some time
in the past. I do not think that Ardal's example actually
shows what it is purported to show, and in the end I am not
convinced by either Ardal or Hume on this point. However,
it still remains to me to show that moral approval or disap-
proval is not, or could not be, aroused by involuntary qual-
ities of mind. I do as a matter of fact think this to be
the case, and I also think that several things that Hume him-
self says could be interpreted so as to suggest that he at
least lays the ground for making this point.

Both Ardal and Hume separate moral approval and dis-
approval from praise and blame, in the sense that neither of
them believe that amenability to praise or blame is a neces-
sary condition of being the object of moral approval or dis-
approval. Hume, for example, argues that:

> Men have observ'd, that tho' natural abilities and
> moral qualities be in the main on the same footing,
> there is, however, this difference between them, that
> the former are almost invariable by any art or in-
> dustry; while the latter, or at least, the actions,
> that proceed from them, may be chang'd by the motives
> of rewards and punishments, praise and blame. Hence
> legislators, and divines, and moralists, have prin-
> cipally applied themselves to the regulating these
> voluntary actions.... (T.609)

He goes on to argue, as quoted earlier, that although it is
only some qualities which are alterable by means of praising
and blaming, this does not constitute a good reason for
limiting the class of moral virtues and vices to these qual-
ities. He does of course say that we "praise or blame"
involuntary qualities (T.609) which might appear to contradict

the point I am making here, but I think that what he means
by "praise and blame" in this case is simply to feel moral
approval or disapproval. His point is thus that we feel
moral approval towards both voluntary and involuntary qual-
ities, although we only attempt to alter behaviour by means
of praising and blaming in the case of voluntary qualities.
Whether or not the behaviour is alterable by praising and
blaming is a different point from, and certainly not a
necessary condition of, feeling moral approval or disap-
proval.

Ardal likewise argues, as I have said above, that:

> we cannot choose to evaluate in one way, rather than
> another, although we may choose to use evaluative
> language for the purpose of encouraging certain be-
> haviour and discouraging other behaviour.[3]

It thus appears to me that there are two distinct questions
to be discussed here: are praising and blaming only appro-
priate in cases where we think that the behaviour is in some
sense voluntary, and ought the appropriateness of praising
or blaming be considered a necessary condition of feeling
moral approval or disapproval. The second question is
equivalent to asking whether a quality's being voluntary
ought to be a necessary condition of feeling moral approval
or disapproval towards it, if the answer to the first ques-
tion is "yes".

In answer to the first question, I do think that
praising and blaming are appropriate only in cases where
we think that the behaviour is in some sense voluntary,
whether or not the person praised or blamed is _presently_
amenable to praise or blame. It is certainly true that

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[3]ibid., p. 160.

we may praise a person for having a good singing voice, but surely we do this as contrasted with admiring his voice, on the grounds that we believe he has put some effort into training or developing this voice. This point can be made more clear if we contrast this praise with the notion of praising someone for being six feet tall. There is something intuitively unsatisfactory about the latter notion, and surely it lies in the distinction between voluntary and involuntary qualities. The point becomes stronger with a consideration of the notion of blaming. To blame a person for possessing an involuntary quality seems contradictory -- the notion of blaming only seems appropriate when we believe that the possession of a quality has been in some sense the result of some voluntary choice or action on his part. Thus, I would argue that praising and blaming presuppose some aspect of voluntariness, and I would further argue that moral approval and disapproval are intrinsically linked with the appropriateness of praise and blame.

The reason I would want to argue this is that I think there is a worthwhile distinction to be made between moral and non-moral approval and disapproval. I do not think that the distinction is in any way clear-cut, so that one could definitely declare in all cases that one's approval was either clearly moral or non-moral. However, I think that there is a difference between, say esteem and moral approval, or admiration and praise. The distinction rests on a distinction between involuntary and voluntary qualities. Just as we admire, rather than praise, a person for having a certain physical characteristic, our feeling of approval towards him would be more appropriately classified

as non-moral rather than moral. There is an important link
between the appropriateness of praising and blaming, and
feeling moral approval or disapproval. One basis for clas-
sifying feelings of approval as moral lies in the appropri-
ateness of praise and blame, and, unlike Hume, I believe
that most people do make the distinction on this basis when
talking about moral, as contrasted with non-moral approval
or disapproval. There is a basis here, which Hume does not
employ at all, for distinguishing between moral approval or
disapproval and non-moral approval or disapproval. It is
certainly true that non-moral approval or disapproval can
be aroused by involuntary qualities, on the basis of Hume's
criteria: their usefulness or agreeableness to the person
himself or to others, but non-moral approval or disapproval
can be distinguished from moral approval or disapproval, on
the grounds that a necessary, although not sufficient con-
dition of moral approval or disapproval is that the quality
in question is voluntary. The distinction, if made in this
way, has nothing to do with the phenomenological character-
istics of the feelings of moral and non-moral approval or
disapproval, but is based on the nature of the qualities
being judged.

Hume's position to this point could be summarized
as: no worthwhile distinction between moral virtues and
natural abilities can be made on the basis of an examina-
tion of virtues and abilities themselves, and the only way
to make a distinction between moral and non-moral qualities
is on the basis of whether they arouse the peculiar feelings
of moral approval or disapproval. The question of whether
or not the qualities are voluntary or involuntary is entirely

irrelevant. My position, on the other hand, is that moral approval or disapproval is not identified solely by introspection, but involves a logical question...that moral, in contrast to non-moral, approval or disapproval is inappropriate if the qualities being approved or disapproved are not voluntary. It is a logical question and not merely a phenomenological one.

Making a distinction between voluntary and involuntary qualities does not, however, necessarily rule out any of the list of virtues which Hume gives. For example, he argues that "constancy, fortitude, magnanimity" are moral virtues, and yet are involuntary. (T.608) I would want to argue that they are not totally involuntary, although they may not be as voluntary as cleanliness, for example. I am not entirely sure what Hume means by "constancy", but suspect he may mean something like consistency in attitude. If this is what it does mean, then it is of course true that some people tend naturally to be more consistent than others. However, we do regard consistency as a "skill" which it is possible to develop. Teachers of philosophy are constantly urging consistency upon their pupils. If he means by "constancy" something like fidelity to principles or people, then once more we have an example of a characteristic. We recommend to people, on the assumption, I believe justified, that it is one which can be developed, even if originally present in an iddividual only to a small degree. Fortitude and magnanimity are likewise surely characteristics which can be developed, although they may originally exist in different degrees in different people. They are thus not entirely involuntary.

Besides arguing that a distinction between voluntary and involuntary qualities does not provide a ground for distinguishing between qualities of mind which are subject to moral approval and disapproval, and qualities which are not, Hume also argues that there is no real distinction to be made in any case between voluntary and involuntary qualities. If no such distinction is possible, then clearly it cannot be used as a basis for distinguishing appropriate objects of moral approval or disapproval. Hume's objection to this distinction is based on his analysis of "free will" and "necessity".

> As to free-will, we have shewn that it has no place with regard to the actions, no more than the qualities of men. It is not a just consequence, that what is voluntary is free. Our actions are more voluntary than our judgments; but we have not more liberty in the one than in the other. (T.609)

I have always found the account given in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* of the lack of opposition between free will and necessity more clear than the one given in the Treatise, and I shall thus draw on it to make the following points.

> Our idea, therefore, of necessity and causation arises entirely from the uniformity observable in the operations of nature, where similar objects are constantly conjoined together, and the mind is determined by custom to infer the one from the appearance of the other. These two circumstances form the whole of that necessity, which we ascribe to matter.... If it appear, therefore, that all mankind have ever allowed, without any doubt or hesitation, that these two circumstances take place in the voluntary actions of men, and in the operations of the mind; it must follow, that all mankind have ever agreed in the doctrine of necessity, and that they have hitherto disputed, merely for not understanding each other. (E.VIII,I, 64

Hume here argues that the uniformity of human behaviour, of which he gives examples gathered from several times and

places, supplies us with ample reason for maintaining that
the voluntary actions of men are "governed" by necessity,
given that "necessity" involves no more than constant con-
junction and the readiness of the mind to move from one to
the other of two constantly conjoined events.

> Thus it appears, not only that the conjunction be-
> tween motives and voluntary actions is as regular
> and uniform as that between the cause and effect in
> any part of nature; But also that this regular con-
> junction has been universally acknowledged among man-
> kind.   (E.VIII,I,69)

Necessity in human action thus involves nothing more than
the constant conjunction of motive and action. Free-will
also involves nothing which conflicts with this account of
necessity.

> For what is meant by liberty, when applied to vol-
> untary actions? We cannot surely mean that actions
> have so little connexion with motives, inclinations
> and circumstances, that one does not follow with a
> certain degree of uniformity from the other, and
> that one affords no inference by which we can con-
> clude the existence of the other. For these are
> plain and acknowledged matters of fact. By liberty,
> then, we can only mean, a power of acting or not
> acting, according to the determinations of the will.
>   (E.VIII,I,73)

Thus, in reference to what Hume here calls the "voluntary"
actions of men (by which he appears to mean those actions
which men do unforced by any other physical body), there is
no distinction between those done freely and those done under
necessity. If this is true, then, as he himself concludes,
it makes no sense to distinguish in the case of qualities
of mind, between those which are free (or "voluntary"), and
those which are under necessity (or "involuntary"), in order
to distinguish those which ought to be subject to moral ap-
proval or disapproval, and those which ought not.

His position is of course very close to the one which
William James in his essay "The Dilemma of Determinism" called

"soft determinism", although Hume does not go on to make the point normally made by modern "soft determinists", that although all events may be part of a causal relationship, there still remain many human actions which can be counted as in some sense voluntary, and which can be significantly distinguished from other human actions which could be classified as involuntary. His conclusion is rather closer to that James called "hard determinism", in that he abandons the distinction altogether as useless. I myself would argue for the position of modern "soft determinism", and maintain that it is possible to make a voluntary-involuntary distinction with reference to human actions and motives, and, of course, that such a distinction is sufficient to be the basis of a distinction between qualities which are properly subject to moral approval or disapproval, and those qualities which are on the other hand subject to an approval or disapproval more properly classified as non-moral. Once again, I would not claim that the distinction is in any sense clear cut and easy to apply, but just that it can, albeit fuzzily and with some difficulty, be made.

Hume's argument in this section is not only that the notion of voluntariness is irrelevant to distinguishing between qualities which are subject to moral approval or disapproval and those which are not, but also, that no useful distinction can be made between moral virtues and natural abilities on such a basis. He used two different arguments: that moral virtues are distinguished from other qualities of mind by whether or not they arouse the appropriate feelings of moral approval or disapproval, and not by any characteristics they may have beside this power, and that, in any

case, all qualities of mind are equally voluntary and/or in-
voluntary, so that the distinction is meaningless. I have
argued against both of these positions, and maintain, in op-
position to Hume, that a distinction can be made between
voluntary and involuntary qualities of mind, and that such a
distinction is relevant for distinguishing between moral and
non-moral approval or disapproval, at least to the extent
that it is a necessary, although not a sufficient, condition
of moral approval or disapproval that the quality so approved
or disapproved be voluntary. I would also maintain that it
is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition of a mental
quality's being a moral virtue in contrast to a natural abil-
ity, that it be voluntary. I do not think, however, that
there exists any simple set of criteria to distinguish vir-
tues from natural abilities, although there appear to be some
clear cases of qualities which are virtues and not simply
natural abilities (benevolence) and some clear cases of
qualities which are natural abilities and not virtues (the
ability to sing well). A few of the features of a quality
which might be taken into account in attempting to formulate
such a distinction are: the extent to which a quality can
be developed by most people (it seems to me that we expect
most people to be able to develop any particular quality we
call a moral virtue), the value or usefulness of the quality
in question (some qualities, such as a particular charming
habit, might be open to development by most people, but seem
too trivial to be called moral virtues) and the extent to
which a particular quality could be said to be an exemplifi-
cation of motives (benevolence might well be analyzed as the
disposition to have certain kinds of motives, the ability to

be a mathematician surely could not). Just how these vari-
ous factors might be weighed and taken into account in de-
termining whether a particular quality is a virtue or a
natural ability is probably impossible to outline in any
great detail or exactness. However, I would submit that
they are all relevant.

Hume, however, when he claims that a distinction be-
tween moral virtues and natural abilities is specious and
irrelevant, would appear to be denying that any of these
factors have any relevance in distinguishing moral virtues
or vices. However, certain things that he says about moral-
ity and the virtues would suggest that he seems to consider
at least some of them relevant.

At this point I would like to refer to a point I
made earlier in this chapter, when I distinguished two sep-
arate positions which Hume appeared to hold with regard to
the nature of the virtues and vices. The first position
was that virtues and vices were distinguished purely on the
grounds of the sensations of pleasure or pain which they
cause in the observer. It is upon this position that Hume's
arguments against distinguishing between virtues and natural
abilities have been based. It will be remembered, however,
that there is a second position derivable from Hume's many
comments on the subject, in brief, that moral virtues are
those qualities of mind which can be analyzed as being dis-
positions to have motives of a certain type, and which cause
in the observer feelings of pleasure, which vary slightly
according to the virtue in question, but which are suffici-
ently similar as to be recognizably feelings of moral ap-
proval. The important point for the question under discussion

here is that moral virtues are dispositions to have certain kinds of motives. There are a large number of qualities of mind which can only with the greatest difficulty be regarded as fitting that analysis. One might consider wit or charm of this class, or the ability to do mathematics. It seems to me that this would provide an excellent basis for distinguishing between moral virtues and natural abilities, at least to the extent that some qualities of mind which are not analyzable as dispositions to have certain sorts of motives, and hence not as moral virtues, would be classifiable as natural abilities.

In reference to another of the factors that I suggested might be relevant in distinguishing between moral virtues and natural abilities, that of the value or usefulness of the quality involved, I again think Hume suggests that this factor plays a role in moral evaluation and hence might be useful for distinguishing moral virtues and vices from other qualities of mind. One of the most important reasons why we regard certain qualities of mind with moral approval is that they are useful. To quote again a passage already referred to:

> Every quality of the mind is denominated virtuous, which gives pleasure by the mere survey; as every quality, which produces pain, is call'd vicious. This pleasure and this pain may arise from four different sources. For we reap a pleasure from the view of a character, which is naturally fitted to be useful to others, or to the person himself, or which is agreeable to others, or to the person himself. (T.591)

His position appears to be that if a quality is useful or agreeable, then it is morally approved of, and if it is not just useless, but actually detrimental, or disagreeable, then it is the subject of moral disapproval. If this is the

case, then these criteria leave open the possibility of there
being qualities of mind which are neither useful nor detri-
mental, but merely useless, and qualities of mind which are
neither agreeable nor disagreeable, but neutral. Moral eval-
uation of such qualities would appear to be inappropriate,
on Hume's own grounds, and such qualities of mind would be
neither moral virtues nor moral vices. Although I do not
think that this distinction would provide a particularly
useful basis for distinguishing between moral virtues and
natural abilities (there is no reason to believe that natural
abilities are on the whole neither useful nor agreeable), it
at least allows one to argue that Hume's own position allows
for distinguishing moral virtues and vices from other qual-
ities of mind.

In conclusion, then, I have tried to show two things,
with reference to a possible distinction between natural
abilities and moral virtues: first, that I think that Hume
is wrong in denying that such a distinction can be made, or
that it is irrelevant, if made, to morality, and secondly,
that Hume's own account of morality suggests that he himself
either implicitly makes the distinction, or that, at the
very least, supplies grounds for making it. I think Hume
is actually inconsistent in this matter. His arguments about
moral approval or disapproval being applicable only to mo-
tives (T.477) appear to be irreconcilable with the sections
of the Treatise where he argues that physical attributes,
among other things, are the subject of moral approval or
disapproval (T.614ff). I would regard the former position
as being more acceptable.

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, Hume

makes a distinction between two kinds of moral virtues, the
natural virtues and the artificial virtues. I regard this
distinction as of crucial importance to his account of mo-
rality. I would like to make a few preliminary general points
about this distinction before beginning a detailed analysis
of the natural and artificial virtues. As Pall Ardal makes
quite clear,[4] he does not mean by "artificial" either "un-
real" or "unnatural to human beings" but rather "produced by
human inventiveness". It should be pointed out here that
genetic or historical explanations of the development of the
artificial virtues are largely irrelevant in Hume's account;
he is primarily interested in the analysis of these virtues
as they presently exist. An artificial virtue is one

> "that produces pleasure and approbation by means
> of an artifice or contrivance, which arises from
> the circumstances and necessity of mankind." (T.477)

These artifices or contrivances appear to be rules, either
legal or conventional, which govern the conduct of men. The
rules, reference to which is an intrinsic part of the motives
underlying the artificial virtues, in a manner which will be
discussed later,

> "are artificial, and seek their end in an oblique
> and indirect manner, nor is the interest, which
> gives rise to them, of a kind that cou'd be pur-
> su'd by the natural and inartificial passions of
> men." (T.497)

The artificial virtues are not foreign to man, but require
some social structure and some agreed set of rules or con-
ventions before they can exist.

It should not be assumed from this, however, that
Hume is positing the existence of some sort of Rousseau-like

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[4]ibid., p 162.

state of nature in which the natural virtues would exist, without any artificial virtues. Nor is he arguing that rules or conventions never have any relevance to the practice of the natural virtues. Certain of the natural virtues, such as generosity, for example, would a good deal of the time involve the notion of property, which presupposes some social conventions. The difference between the natural and the artificial virtues on this point is that in particular cases the natural virtues may involve reference to rules or conventions, whereas the artificial virtues necessarily involve reference to such conventions. The difference will be seen partly in the typical motives underlying these classes of virtues. The motives underlying the artificial virtues necessarily involve reference to a social convention, the motives underlying the natural virtues do not, although the exercise of the natural virtues often requires a social structure. As well Hume does appear to believe that education is sometimes necessary in the development of the natural virtues.

Thus, it is possible to get clear, on a somewhat superficial level, what the distinction is. The artificial virtues are dependent upon some "artificial contrivance" in order to exist and be put into practice; that is, they require "artificial" rules or conventions in a social structure, whereas the natural virtues do not. A comparison of justice, Hume's paradigm example of an artificial virtue, and benevolence, one of the natural virtues, will make the point more clear. Before a man can deliberately perform a just act, as a just act, and not as an act which accidentally conforms to the rules of justice, for example, one involving the transfer of property, he must know what the laws

or rules are of the society of which he is a member. If he
does not know the laws or rules, the action he performs may
or may not be just, but he cannot have deliberately performed
a just act. On the other hand, a man can deliberately per-
form an act of benevolence, for example, one of relieving
suffering, without knowing what the laws or rules of his
society are. Laws, rules, or conventions are not necessary
for benevolence, whereas they are necessary for justice.
This description is obviously open to qualifications, but
it should be sufficient to give a general idea of the dis-
tinction which Hume makes. A more detailed account of this
distinction will follow from an analysis of the natural and
artificial virtues.

CHAPTER 3

The Natural Virtues

Hume gives, in various places throughout the Third
Book of the Treatise, a long list of the qualities of mind
he considers to be natural virtues: humanity (relief of
suffering), beneficence, charity, generosity, clemency,
moderation, equity, constancy, fortitude, magnanimity, pru-
dence, temperance, frugality, industry, assiduity, enter-
prize, meekness, dexterity, cleanliness, wisdom, good-sense,
wit, eloquence, and good humour. As could be expected from
my previous comments, I view this list as unnecessarily broad,
even though I have excluded the qualities mentioned in that
unfortunate section where Hume discusses bodily attributes
(T.614 ff) and appears to include such items as regularity of
features, broad shoulders, firm joints, and taper legs among
the natural virtues. I see no good purpose which might be
served by considering each of the virtues listed, to deter-
mine whether they ought to be included within a list of <u>moral</u>
virtues...some I think might well be eliminated, but the point
is not very important.

The first thing that ought to be considered is the
motives characteristic of the natural virtues, since virtues
are to be analyzed in terms of motives. In the case of each
of the natural virtues there is, Hume claims, an appropriate
natural motive:

> <u>no action can be virtuous, or morally good, unless
> there be in human nature some motive to produce it,
> distinct from the sense of its morality.</u>   (T.479)

In the case of the virtue of benevolence, for example, there
is a natural motive to perform the sort of action which is

called benevolent, or rather, a disposition to have the nat-
ural motive to perform the sort of action called benevolent.
This motive does not involve the notion of performing a mor-
ally good action, that is, this natural motive cannot be
analyzed as a combination of the desire to perform a specific
action and the desire to perform a morally good action. It
is not clear from the text what the nature of this natural
motive is. We know from the small amount of detail available
that it must be some sort of natural motive and that it can-
not be a regard to the virtuousness of the action:

> the virtuous motive must be different from the
> regard to the virtue of the action.   (T.478)

The following model might begin to give us some sort of idea
of the characteristic motive underlying a natural virtue: a
man has a virtue if and only if he has a settled disposition
to do acts of a certain type, each of which acts he wants to
do because he has a certain sort of thought concerning that
act and/or its circumstances; and in no case is that thought
the thought "doing this would be an instance of benevolence
(for example)" or "doing this would be the morally right thing
to do". Hume argues at one point that:

> A man that really feels no gratitude in his temper,
> is still pleas'd to perform grateful actions, and
> thinks he has, by that means, fulfill'd his duty....
> But tho', on some occasions, a person may perform
> an action merely out of regard to its moral obliga-
> tion, yet this still supposes in human nature some
> distinct principles, which are capable of producing
> the action, and whose moral beauty renders the action
> meritorious.   (T.479) italics mine

The first part of the quoted passage does appear to suggest
that a man who performs an action because (from the motive
that) the action in question is one typical of a particular
virtue, does not have that virtue and is not deserving of
moral approval (if we take the notion of not having fulfilled

one's duty to be equivalent to not being deserving of moral approval). However, given that, the second sentence might be taken to suggest that a man may perform an action out of regard to its moral obligatoriness, and still be the subject of moral approbation, provided that ho has at some time (whether this may be only once, or frequently, is another question, although the notion of a disposition suggests frequently), performed the action from some other motive than a regard to its moral worth. However, none of this is at all helpful in attempting to reconstruct the nature of the motive which must underlie a natural virtue; it only makes clear that Hume thought there must be such a motive.

The paradigm example of a natural virtue in the Treatise is the virtue of benevolence. Benevolence is actually a rather wide-reaching virtue, seeming to include a large number of different features.

> From these principles [sympathy and the general point of view] we may easily account for that merit, which is commonly ascrib'd to generosity humanity, compassion, gratitude, friendship, fidelity, zeal, disinterestedness, liberality, and all those other qualities, which form the character of good and benevolent. (T.603)

However, in general it appears to be analyzed by Hume as certain sorts of desires, broadly described as the desire for the happiness of the person who is the object of the desire.

> Certain calm desires, which, tho' they be real passions, produce little emotion in the mind.... These desires are of two kinds; either certain instincts originally implanted in our natures, such as benevolence and resentment, the love of life, and kindness to children.... (T.417)

> The passions of love and hatred are always followed by, or rather conjoin'd with benevolence and anger. (T.367)

> According as we are possess'd with love or hatred, the correspondent desire of the happiness

or misery of the person, who is the object of
these passions, arises in the mind. (T.368)

To be benevolent, then, is to desire that people be happy,
and the benevolent man is the man who desires the happiness
of other people. The problem with this analysis, however,
is that the desire that people be happy does not quite count
as being a motive, and not even clearly as being a disposi-
tion to have certain sorts of motives, since it is certainly
conceivable that a man might desire the happiness of others
without ever choosing to do anything to contribute to that
happiness. Such a man would not really have the virtue of
benevolence, if that is to be analyzed in terms of disposi-
tions to have certain sorts of motives, and, as a matter of
fact, I would doubt whether we would want to call such a man
benevolent in any case.

Perhaps considering the problem from the point of
view of an agent in a specific situation would further help
to clarify the question. Let us then consider a man seeing
another man in trouble of some sort, say drowning. It ap-
pears to me that the agent could have several different
sorts of motives, all concerned with the rescue of the other
man. For example, the agent could want to jump into the
lake after the man, could want to rescue the man in some way
or another, could want to do the right thing in the situa-
tion, which may or may not be rescuing the man, could want
to jump into the lake after the man because this would be
a way of rescuing him, or could want to rescue the man if
the man promised a healthy reward. The question now is,
which of these motives could be considered to fit the classi-
fication of a natural motive underlying the virtue of bene-
volence. We can first of all easily eliminate the motive,

wanting to do the right thing in the situation, since this
is clearly a motive concerned with the moral worth of the
action, which Hume has not allowed. Wanting to rescue the
man for a reward can also, I think, be eliminated, since it
looks more like a motive underlying the vice of greed rather
than the virtue of benevolence; it is simply inappropriate.
None of the other three possible motives I have listed can
be so easily rejected as the appropriate natural motive.
However, the first one suggested, wanting to jump into the
lake after the man, I think will also fail to fit the classi-
fication. If a virtue is to be analyzed in terms of a dis-
position to have certain sorts of motives, then a disposition
to jump into lakes after people will not quite do as an ap-
propriate underlying motive for the virtue of benevolence:
it seems at least somewhat incomplete. Jumping into lakes
after people is an appropriate motive only in certain partic-
ular situations: when people are actually in the water and
in danger of drowning. A man who attempted to rescue people
only in that situation and in no other would surely not be
regarded as having the virtue of benevolence. (He would
probably be regarded as being at least slightly mad, but this
is another question, with which I am not here concerned).

We are thus left with two possible motives from the
list I suggested...wanting to rescue the man in some way or
another, and wanting to jump into the lake after the man be-
cause it would be a way of rescuing him. There seems to me
to be very little difference between these two. Both are
examples of the desire to rescue the drowning man, the second
one having added a specific way of going about fulfilling
this desire. I would thus suggest that wanting to rescue the

drowning man might serve as the appropriate natural motive
underlying the virtue of benevolence. However, expressing
it in that way leaves my argument open to the same criticism
I made above, that the desire to rescue a drowning man is
only appropriate in particular situations, that is, when
there is actually a man in danger of drowning, and that we
would not regard a man as benevolent who only wanted to
rescue drowning men, and was not concerned with rescuing men
in burning buildings, for example, or was not interested in
helping people unless they were in danger of dying. However,
I think that wanting to rescue a drowning man can be sensibly
described as being an example of wanting to help a person in
difficulties; wanting to rescue a drowning man would be the
sort of motive appropriate to the virtue of benevolence.

The point of this discussion is that if, as Hume
claims, the natural virtues are to be analyzed in terms of
particular sorts of motives, the only sorts of motives which
would fit his requirements are those of the sort: wanting to
help a person in difficulties, or wanting some person to be
happy, (in these circumstances) which amounts to the same
thing. The virtue-motive must embody the general aim, such
as helping a person in difficulties, it will not have been
captured in a description of the specific intention to act,
such as "jumping in to save this man". That is, the motives
underlying the natural virtues are best described in terms
of general purposes, rather than the intentions to do specific
actions. Thus a man having the virtue of benevolence would
be a man having a disposition to have motives to help people
or make people happy; a man with the virtue of frugality, to
save money; a man with the virtue of industry, to work hard,

and so forth. None of these motives necessarily involve reference to the moral worth of these purposes, which meets one of Hume's requirements, and all of them could be described as being "natural", in the sense that the thought characteristic of the motive makes no necessary reference to any rule or convention, which is what Hume appears to require to call a motive natural. I discussed this point in Chapter 2 above. There is still the problem about whether the motive to help people in difficulty is a sort of general desire, or whether it is better analyzed as a number of specific desires in specific situations; that is, does the benevolent man, for example, have a general desire to help people, which he puts into practice when appropriate situations arise, or is it just the case that when the appropriate situation arises, he then has the specific desire to help people in that situation. Clearly both cases are as a matter of fact possible, but the question is whether one or the other better accords with Hume's theory, as what he means by a natural motive. He several times refers to "principles" in the human mind as being the true object of moral approval or disapproval: (T.575, T477, T608). It is on the basis of these sorts of comments that I have been discussing the virtues as being dispositions to have certain kinds of motives, since the emphasis on character and certain principles suggests that Hume does not regard a single instance of a morally desirable motive as being indicative of the possession of a virtue. However, it is also possible that he would not regard a collection of particular motives of a certain kind as indicative of character, but rather a more general sort of motive, of the wanting to help people in general sort. The general

desire to help people might, in other words, be better de-
scribed as a principle, or character, than would a series
of particular desires to help people in particular situa-
tions.

There are certain situations in which the distinction
I have been suggesting could not be clearly made. For ex-
ample, a man may always, when faced with a situation where
another person needs help, want to help him, without being
aware of a general desire to help people. However, if he
always did, then it would seem very strange to say that he
did not have a general desire to help people; it is not clear
what more would be necessary to having such a desire (and
at least in such a case it looks as though awareness of one's
desires is surely not a necessary condition of having them).
On the other hand, a man may frequently desire to help people,
but only in certain sorts of situations, and never in other
sorts, as in my previous example of a man who only wants to
help people who are drowning. Of this man it would appear
not to be true that he had a general desire to help people,
and thus there is a distinction to be made between having a
general desire to help people, and having, in particular
situations, the particular desire to help people in those
situations. Perhaps the distinction to be made is not be-
tween general and particular desires, but rather between,
on the one hand, the man who either has a general desire to
help people, or else, in a wide and frequent variety of
situations, has particular desires to help people in those
situations, and, on the other hand the man who only has the
desire to help people in a limited number of situations.
It would seem to me to make sense to say that the former

man had a disposition to have motives of a particular sort
which would characterize him as being benevolent, whereas
the latter man did not. It also seems to me that both the
man who had a general desire to help people which was put
into practice or action in a variety of different situations,
and the man who, in a wide variety of different situations,
frequently had the specific desire to help people in those
situations, would be exhibiting the certain character or prin-
ciple which Hume requires for moral approval. Looked at in
these terms, the distinction between a general desire, and
a disposition to have specific desires of a certain kind,
seems insubstantial. What is necessary, however, is that the
specific desires should embody a general purpose.

It might be objected that describing the motives
underlying the virtues in terms of purpose might be bringing
in a consideration of the moral value of action, in the sense
that a desire to help a person in difficulties might involve
implicitly the belief that to do so would be morally admi-
rable. However, I do not think that this is necessarily the
case. Surely one can want to help people in difficulty,
because they are in difficulty, without the prior recogni-
tion that this would be morally praiseworthy; and even if a
sophisticated or selfconscious agent were disposed to have,
together with this motive, the thought "this action is morally
praiseworthy", it is not this thought that is operative in
the motive of benevolence, but the thought, "this man needs
help". The same I think is true of the other natural virtues
such a frugality and industry; the desire to save one's
money or work hard is surely possible without the belief that
it is morally right. The artificial virtues present some

complications with respect to this point, but I shall discuss
them later in the following chapter.

Although this analysis of the virtue of benevolence
goes beyond the one I ascribed to Hume at the beginning of
this chapter, in that it contains rather more elements than
simply the desire that other people be happy, I do not
think it conflicts with that original account. As I noted
at that point, the desire that people be happy does not in
itself entail any particular motives, but the sort of motives
I have suggested that the benevolent man might well have
would certainly be typical of a man who desires other peoples'
happiness. Given that there are other reasons, taken from
Hume's own points on other aspects of morality and moral
assessment, for analyzing virtues in terms of dispositions
to have certain sorts of motives, I think my account here
of a typical motive, or a typical sort of motive, fits the
general outline of Hume's theory without any difficulties.

In maintaining that the virtues are analysable in
terms of motives which necessarily do not have reference to
the moral value of the action to be performed, but which are
in some sense natural to men, Hume is of course taking a posi-
tion about moral philosophy diametrically opposed to the
positions of deontologists such as Kant. Obedience to duty
is not to Hume the primary moral value, -- it holds, as a
matter of fact, a very insignificant place in his moral
theory. According to Hume, a man is morally admirable not
if he consciously does his duty, but if he has certain
qualities of character. This aspect of Hume's theory per-
haps makes it easier to understand why he regards the volun-
tary-involuntary distinction, which I discussed in the

previous chapter, as irrelevant. He appears to regard moral worth in a man not as something that must be developed, but as something that he has. This is not to say that Hume would argue that moral virtues cannot be developed, but that his primary concern is with virtues as they do exist in men. There seems to be no over-riding reason presented in Hume's work to deny that a man might develop a moral virtue, but I would think that Hume would not regard him as actually having it until such time as he had the appropriate motives without considering whether the action was morally correct...the Aristotelian notion of developing a virtue through habit does not seem ruled out.

On the basis of what little Hume actually says, then, I have attempted to construct some sort of picture of what he would have regarded as the motives underlying the natural virtues. I would next like to consider, in the same way, the motives underlying the artificial virtues.

CHAPTER 4

The Artificial Virtues

Hume's paradigm example of an artificial virtue is the virtue of justice, and I shall direct most of my discussion in this chapter to that particular virtue. However, he does give examples of a number of other artificial virtues, such as promise-keeping, allegiance to one's country, chastity and modesty. The important point about the artificial virtues is that they depend for their existence upon some artifice or contrivance of society.

> there are some virtues, that produce pleasure and
> approbation by means of an artifice or contrivance,
> which arises from the circumstances and necessity
> of mankind. (T.477)

These rules or conventions are not natural, in the way that the laws of nature, for example, are natural; they are established by men to fulfill some purpose, and their details vary in different societies, and are often changed. From this it follows that there can be no natural motives to perform the actions corresponding to the artificial virtues in the sense that there are natural motives to perform the actions corresponding to the natural virtues.

> nor is the interest, which gives rise to them,
> [the rules of justice] of a kind that cou'd be
> pursu'd by the natural and inartificial passions
> of men. (T.497)

In the terms of Hume's description of benevolence, a natural virtue, there could be no inborn instincts or passions which correspond to the artificial virtues in the way that the desire that other people be happy could be an instinct corresponding to the virtue of benevolence. The important point is not one about the genesis or aetiology of the

different sorts of virtue. A virtue, to be "natural" in
Hume's sense, does not have to be instinctual; but it (log-
ically) could be, in the sense that its basic motive makes
no necessary reference to convention. Similarly, it is not
simply a matter of fact that there are no natural motives
to perform acts of, for example, justice, but a matter of
logic as well. Given that the artificial virtues rest upon
conventions, the motives underlying these virtues must also
rest on, and refer to, conventions.

> In vain shou'd we expect to find, in <u>uncultivated
> nature</u>, a remedy to this inconvenience; or hope
> for any inartificial principle of the human mind,
> which might controul those partial affections, and
> make us overcome the temptations arising from our
> circumstances. The idea of justice can never serve
> to this purpose, or be taken for a natural prin-
> ciple....   (T.488)

As I did with the natural virtues, I shall attempt
to reconstruct the nature of the motives underlying the
artificial virtues, concentrating on the virtue of justice.
There is one condition which the motives underlying the
artificial virtues must fulfill, as much as those underlying
the natural virtues: the motives themselves cannot be, or
contain, a reference to the moral worth of the action to be
performed, or to the moral worth of acting from such a mo-
tive. Moreover the motives of the artificial virtues must
be, in some sense, based upon or derived from "natural" mo-
tives, although, as I have noted above, they cannot be
straightforwardly "natural", since they depend on conven-
tions for their existence. Both of these conditions follow
from Hume's basic accounts of virtues and the objects of
moral approval.

> No actions can be virtuous, but so far as it pro-
> ceeds from a virtuous motive. A virtuous motive,

> therefore, must precede the regard to the virtue;
> and 'tis impossible, that the virtuous motive and
> the regard to the virtue can be the same.   (T.480)

> no action can be virtuous, or morally good, unless
> there be in human nature some motive to produce it,
> distinct from the sense of its morality.   (T.479)

There might be some question as to whether Hume actually in-

tended these two conditions to apply to artificial as well

as to natural virtues. The use of the phrase "no action" in

both passages creates, I think, a strong presumption that

he did intend this. As we shall see, the first of these con-

ditions is more difficult to fulfill in regard to the motives

underlying the artificial virtues than it was _ with ref-

erence to the natural virtues and their motives, while the

sense in which the second is satisfied is not entirely clear,

either. Like the motives underlying the natural virtues,

the motives underlying the artificial virtues should prob-

ably be analyzed in terms of purposes rather than actions.

This point is (as a matter of fact) rather more obvious in

the case of the artificial virtues.

Before I begin to discuss the motives underlying the

artificial virtues, I think it is important to make a dis-

tinction between three things: the account Hume gives of

the origin of the artificial virtues, that is, the reasons

why such virtues have been developed; the justification of

the artificial virtues, that is, the reasons why Hume believes

that these virtues play a valuable role in society and in

morality; and the actual motives that the man having the

artificial virtue of justice might be expected to act upon.

These questions are all closely related, and it is necessary

to discuss the first two, in order to get a clear picture

of a typical artificial virtue and the expected underlying

motives, but they are also distinct questions, and ought not
to be confused, as Hume himself says. (T.484)

About the origin of justice, Hume argues:

> that 'tis only from the selfishness and confin'd
> generosity of men, along with the scanty provision
> nature has made for his wants, that justice derives
> its origin. (T.495)

> 'Twas therefore a concern for our own, and the pub-
> lick interest, which made us establish the laws of
> justice. (T.496)

> Were men, therefore, to take the liberty of acting,
> with regard to the laws of society, as they do in
> every other affair, they wou'd conduct themselves,
> on most occasions, by particular judgments, and
> wou'd take into consideration the characters and
> circumstances of the persons, as well as the gen-
> eral nature of the question. But 'tis easy to ob-
> serve, that this wou'd produce an infinite con-
> fusion in human society, and that the avidity and
> partiality of men wou'd quickly bring disorder into
> the world, if not restrain'd by some general and
> inflexible principles. 'Twas therefore, with a
> view to this inconvenience, that men have estab-
> lish'd those principles, and have agreed to restrain
> themselves by general rules, which are unchange-
> able by spite and favour, and by particular views
> of private and public interest. (T.532)

and finally:

> In man alone, this unnatural conjunction of infirmity,
> and of necessity, may be observ'd in its greatest
> perfection.....'Tis by society alone that he is able
> to supply his defects, and raise himself up to an
> equality with his fellow-creatures, and even acquire
> a superiority above them. By society all his in-
> firmities are compensated.... (T.484)

Hume's argument is basically that the origin of justice lies
in the selfishness of men. It is by instituting such con-
ventions that men can best fulfill their desires. Recogniz-
ing that society is necessary to such fulfillment, men set
up rules which will maintain that society in being, and thus
allow them to fulfill their selfish desires in the most con-
venient way possible. Hume does not argue that men have no
"fellow-feeling" whatsoever, but that it is in general
limited to their friends and relations, and that they need

more people than these in order to develop a working society.

The justification for the institution of such rules or conventions is that they contribute to the general well-being of all people in the society.

> This system, therefore, comprehending the interest
> of each individual, is of course advantageous to
> the public; tho' it be not intended for that pur-
> pose by the inventors.   (T.529)

Since this is the case, individual cases of injustice are seen to cause pain, and by means of the operation of sympathy (a topic which we shall consider in detail in the following chapter) this causes moral disapproval in the observer.

> But tho' in our own actions we may frequently lose
> sight of that interest, which we have in maintaining
> order, and may follow a lesser and more present in-
> terest, we never fail to observe the prejudice we
> receive, either mediately or immediately, from the
> injustice of others; as not being in that case either
> blinded by passion, or bypass'd by any contrary temp-
> tation. Nay when the injustice is so distant from
> us, as no way to affect our interest, it still dis-
> pleases us; because we consider it prejudicial to
> human society, and pernicious to every one that ap-
> proaches the person guilty of it. We partake of
> their uneasiness by sympathy; and as every thing,
> which gives uneasiness in human actions, upon the
> general survey, is call'd Vice, and whatever pro-
> duces satisfaction, in the same manner, is denomi-
> nated Virtue; this is the reason why the sense of
> moral good and evil follows upon justice and injus-
> tice.... Thus self-interest is the original motive
> to the establishment of justice; but a sympathy
> with public interest is the source of the moral
> approbation which attends that virtue.   (T.499-500)

Thus the artificial virtues are justified in their existence; in the sense of being the object of moral approval, because they contribute to the general happiness of all of the members of society, or, in other words, because they are useful.

Having reached this point, we can begin to consider the rather thorny problem of the motives one might expect the man possessed of an artificial virtue to have.

If one attempts an analysis parallel to the analysis

given of the motives underlying benevolence, one would say
that the virtue of justice consisted of a disposition to
have desires to do the sort of actions called just, but not
because there is some moral value in acting this way or from
these motives. In the case of benevolence, it was fairly
simple to describe the typical desires as desires to make
people happy, or to help people in difficulty, or any other
of the sorts of desires typical of the benevolent man, all
of these desires certainly being possible without there be-
ing any prior recognition that such desires would be typical
of the virtue of benevolence, or that having such desires
was morally praiseworthy. However, it is not so easy to
come up with a parallel description of the typical desires
underlying the virtue of justice. The first answer which
would come to mind is the desire to do the just or right or
correct thing in the situation. But this answer apparently
would not do for Hume, since it fairly clearly seems to be
an appeal to the moral value of acting in such a fashion.
Presumably this could be avoided in some degree by analyz-
ing "the desire to do the right or just action" as "the
desire to act according to the rules of justice". Providing
this desire does not necessarily involve the thought that
the rules of justice, or acting in conformity with the rules
of justice, has moral value, then this could be submitted
as a typical desire underlying the virtue of justice, which
desire is not a regard to the moral value of so acting.

There are, however, at least two problems concerned
with this proposed desire. The first is that this descrip-
tion of the desire immediately leads one to ask: why follow
the rules or conventions of justice? The desire to follow

the rules of justice does not appear to be the same sort of
desire as the desire, say, to help people in difficulty, in
the sense that it could not be regarded as an end in itself,
in the way that the latter desire could. There is something
strange about the desire to follow the rules of justice,
but not because doing so would be the right thing to do. I
am not arguing that no one could have such a blind desire,
and I shall later discuss the proposition that Hume might
regard it as a good thing if such blind desires were developed
in people, but rather that such a desire is unsuitable as
the foundation of a virtue. At the very least, the desire
would have to be one to follow the rules or conventions of
justice blindly, since following the rules of soccer does
not make one just. It is not entirely clear how these rules
would be picked out and distinguished from other possible
rules, if not on the basis of their "justice", which is very
difficult to reduce to a non-moral concept.

If we leave aside for the moment the possibility
that the underlying motives of the virtue of justice are
desires to follow a certain set of rules or conventions,
blindly, we might first of all consider what sort of reasons
one might have for following these rules. It will remembered
that Hume said that the motive for establishing the rules
of justice was basically self-interest, whereas the moral
value attributed to following these rules arose from the
pain felt, either directly or sympathetically, when they
were not followed. I do not think that one can derive
directly from this that the motive for following the rules
of justice in any particular case is self-interest, or for
that matter, self-interest combined with limited benevolence.

There is no theoretical reason for supposing that the motive for establishing something will be the same as the motive for acting in accordance with this establishment, even if one assumes that the same people are concerned with both aspects. In the case of the rules of justice, it might well be the case that although the motive for establishing these rules was self-interest, the reason for following them is the desire not to cause other men pain, which is not the same motive.

In any case, it is clear that in particular situations, neither self-interest nor benevolence, however wide or limited, would necessarily dictate the following of the rules.

> If we examine all the questions, that come before any tribunal of justice, we shall find, that, considering each case apart, it wou'd as often be an instance of humanity to decide contrary to the public good; and 'tis only the concurrence of mankind, in a general scheme or system of action, which is advantageous.
> (T.579)

> single acts of justice may be contrary, either to public or private interest....   (T.497)

Thus, for single acts of justice, the motive cannot consistently be either self-interest, benevolence, or a combination of both, since there are frequently cases where any of these possible motives would dictate an action different from the one prescribed by the rules of justice. The same would be true of any other possible motive one might imagine as appropriate in particular cases: there would always be some case where the motive would dictate an action contrary to the rules or conventions of justice. The only remaining motive would then be the desire to conform to such rules or conventions.

The question then shifts to what motive there could

be for following the rules of justice as a whole. Once again,
it is not immediately obvious that because the motive for
establishing the rules of justice is self-interest, it will
be the case that the motive for adhering to them will also be
self-interest. One can always point to Glaucon and Adeimantus
in Book II of Plato's Republic, whose position could be des-
cribed as advocating the establishment of such rules out of
self-interest, but who would argue that once the rules are
established, self-interest dictates that one not obey them,
so long as one can do so secretly. Thus, it is not clear
that the motive for following the rules of justice in gen-
eral is self-interest.

Hume argues that:

a sympathy with public interest is the source of
the moral approbation which attends that virtue
[justice]. (T.500)

We never fail to observe the prejudice we receive,
either mediately or immediately, from the injus-
tice of others. (T.499)

We disapprove of injustice as practiced by others, since we
see that it causes pain, and this perception causes us pain,
thereby arousing the feeling of moral disapproval. It may
be that this process might be attributed to feelings of
benevolence in the observer, or the desire to see other men
happy. If this is the case, it then might be argued that
benevolence is our motive for obeying the rules of justice
in general. However, I do not find this analysis entirely
convincing either. First of all, our reasons for approving
an action by another person may well not be our reason for
doing that sort of action ourselves. For example, we may
approve of the virtue of frugality in another person be-
cause we see that it leads to his happiness and we desire

his happiness, but yet our own motive for being frugal is not that doing so will make us happy, but simply because we have the natural desire to be frugal. Hence, that we approve of justice as practised by other people because of the virtue of benevolence, it does not follow that benevolence is our own motive for following the rules of justice. In any case, to say that the reason we morally disapprove of actions which cause pain for other people is that we have the virtue of benevolence, is to reduce all of morality to benevolence, since all judgments of moral approval or disapproval are based on pleasure and pain. It is not because we feel benevolence that we approve of certain actions or motives, and disapprove of others, it is because they cause us pleasure or pain, either directly, or by sympathy, and this immediately arouses the feelings of moral approval or disapproval. In the end I do not think that it can be established in this way that benevolence is the underlying motive of the virtue of justice, in the sense that it is the motive for following the rules of justice in general.

The question then to be asked is, can it be established by any other means that self-interest or benevolence or a combination of these two form the motive for following the rules of justice in general? I do not think so. For one thing, I do not think that self-interest is appropriate at all, since surely self-interest alone would dictate that one follow the rules of justice so long as they are to one's advantage, but otherwise, do one's best secretly to circumvent them; secretly, so as not to damage the fabric of society, upon which one's happiness depends. Benevolence, also, will not do, since the rules of justice contribute to

the happiness of the whole society, not just to any partic-
ular group, and Hume is quite clear that we do not have a
feeling of benevolence which extends to all of society, and,
as a matter of fact, if we did, the rules of justice would
be totally unnecessary.

> experience sufficiently proves, that men, in the
> ordinary conduct of life, look not so far as the
> public interest, when they pay their creditors,
> perform their promises, and abstain from theft,
> and robbery, and injustice of every kind. That
> is a motive too remote and too sublime to affect
> the generality of mankind, and operate with any
> force in actions so contrary to private interest
> as are frequently those of justice and common
> honesty.   (T.481)

Finally, given the lack of general benevolence, I do not
think that any combination of the natural motives of self-
interest and benevolence would serve as the motive for fol-
lowing the rules of justice in general. Nor can I think of
any other "natural" motive which might serve the purpose
for us.

Probably the search for some "natural" motive to
underlie the virtue of justice, in the sense either of par-
ticular desires to perform acts of justice in particular
cases, or in the sense of a general desire to follow the
rules of justice, is simply misguided. Hume does after all
say:

> we have no real or universal motive for observing
> the laws of equity...the sense of justice and in-
> justice is not deriv'd from nature but arises arti-
> ficially, tho' necessarily from education, and human
> conventions.   (T.483)

and:

> [promises] are the conventions of men, which
> create a new motive, when experience has taught
> us, that human affairs wou'd be conducted much
> more for mutual advantage....   (T.522)

But to argue that the artificial virtues are not based on

natural motives at all is to run into immediate conflict with one of Hume's own premises,

> no action can be virtuous, or morally good, unless there be in human nature some motive to produce it, distinct from the sense of its morality.   (T.479)
>   (italics mine)

Alternatively, one might perhaps argue that the artificial virtues are in some sense extensions of the natural virtues, or a re-direction of the natural virtues. Such an interpretation might be supported by such statements by Hume as:

> nature provides a remedy in the judgment and understanding, for what is irregular and incommodious in the affections.   (T.489)

It is in reference to this passage that Ardal argues that

> the judgment or understanding do not give rise to any new motive, which opposes, and can be contrasted with, the passions. The understanding changes only the direction of the passions.[1]

This would suggest that the artificial virtues are not really separate virtues from the natural ones, but the same virtues redirected by reason. There are several reasons for rejecting such an account. For one thing, Hume does regard justice as a virtue -- a distinct virtue, and not just an example of another virtue, such as benevolence. The largest part of the Third Book of the Treatise is concerned with the artificial virtues, and with justice in particular, which suggests that he does not regard the artificial virtues simply as examples of redirected natural virtues, but as virtues in their own right, so to speak. In the second place, there does, as a matter of fact, seem to be such a thing as a desire to be just, or to act justly, which is

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[1]Ardal, ibid, p. 177.

distinct from the desire to be benevolent or prudent, or to
act benevolently, from self-interest, or from any other
"natural" motive that one might think of. There are, as
Hume suggests, many situations in which the just action
would appear to be morally perverse if considered from any
other point of view besides that of justice. We can use
as examples such cases as people avoiding a conviction for
breaking a law which they clearly did break, because of
some technical error of the judge when giving his summary
to the jury. Many other examples can clearly be thought of.
Since Hume suggests this point, I would present it as argu-
ment for the claim that he himself accepts the distinction
I am making. There are a number of other reasons why I do
not believe that the artificial virtues ought to be analysed
simply as redirected natural virtues, having to do with the
role rules play in the artificial virtues and their underlying
motives, and with the difficulty of removing any reference
to moral value from these motives. Since these points are
yet to be discussed, I can at this point only suggest that
the differences between the artificial and natural virtues
are so great that it is implausible to regard the motives
underlying the artificial virtues as being merely redirected
natural motives. I will thus here only say that it is my
belief that the motives underlying the artificial virtues
are not redirected versions of benevolence or self-interest,
or of any other motive typical of another virtue, and that
it appears that Hume does not in the case of the artificial
virtues meet the criterion that these virtues must rest on
motives which already exist in "human nature".

We are still left with the problem of what the

motives typical of the virtue of justice might be. In partic-
ular cases, I do not think there can be any alternative to
arguing that the underlying motive must be the desire to do
the just act, not as a specific kind of action, but as an ac-
tion which is just. Since the rules of justice are "artifi-
cial conventions", and the actions which justice requires
are very often not the actions which any other natural motive
would lead one to desire to do, it is clear that there could
be no consistent natural desire not referring to the rules
of justice which would lead a person to do all those sorts of
actions. In the particular case, then, the motive must be a
desire to conform to a certain set of rules or conventions.

This point can also be made by pointing out that the
rules of justice, being in some sense arbitrary, could vary
from time to time and place to place. Hume does not believe
that they are completely arbitrary, and I am not suggesting
that they are.

> Tho' the rules of justice be _artificial_, they are
> not _arbitrary_. Nor is the expression improper to
> call them _Laws of Nature_; if by natural we under-
> stand what is common to any species, or even if we
> confine it to mean what is inseparable from the
> species.   (T.484)

He frequently refers to the rules of justice as being "Laws
of Nature" (T.520, 523, 567), thus suggesting that although
they are artificial, they are also natural, in the sense
that all men are forced to establish them. However, it
still remains that the details, or the manner in which these
fundamental laws of nature and justice are put into practice,
will vary with time and place, and although all men may have
conventions about property, how property is transferred
from one person to another depends to a large degree on the
particular laws of the state. The man who has the virtue of

justice will not desire to transfer his property by means of a particular set formula, but merely to transfer it in the legal or just way. Thus, in the particular case, the motive must involve a reference to the conventions of justice, in that the desire must be to act according to these conventions, and not merely to perform a particular action.

The question then arises, does such a motive involve a reference to the moral value of acting in such a fashion, or of acting from such a motive? It would appear that such a consideration would be difficult to remove from the particular case. The agent would appear to want to do something, and to want to do it in the just, or correct, or right, way. This surely is some reference, however, oblique, to the moral value of acting from such a motive, or in such a fashion. Hume himself says:

> we have no real or universal motive for observing the laws of equity, but the very equity and merit of that observance; and as no action can be equitable or meritorious, where it cannot arise from some separate motive, there is here an evident sophistry and reasoning in a circle. Unless, therefore, we will allow, that nature has establish'd a sophistry, and render'd it necessary and unavoidable, we must allow, that the sense of justice and injustice is not deriv'd from nature, but arises artificially, tho' necessarily from education, and human conventions. (T.483)

> there is naturally no inclination to observe promises, distinct from a sense of their obligation. (T.519)

Therefore I would argue that in the particular case, the motive underlying the virtue of justice would be the desire to do something in a just fashion, and that this desire necessarily involves reference to the moral value of acting in such a fashion. It also, of course, necessarily involves reference to the conventions or rules of justice, and thus the particular motive not only presupposes knowledge of the

existence of such rules, it also involves explicit reference
to them. In the particular case, then, it appears that the
motives underlying the artificial virtues do not meet the
criterion that

> the virtuous motive must be different from the
> regard to the virtue of the action.   (T.478)

We have still to consider the general case, the mo-
tive that might underlie the virtue of justice in the sense
of the motive for following the rules of justice in general.
I am here suggesting that it is not impossible that the just
man, besides in particular cases having the desire to ful-
fill his purposes in a just fashion, might also have a gen-
eral desire to be just. This is the same distinction I
suggested with regard to benevolence, where I suggested that
the benevolent man might, as well as in particular cases
having the desire to make people happy, have a general desire
that people be happy. In the case of benevolence I argued
that the distinction was not really very important. In the
case of justice, and all artificial virtues, I think more
ought to be made of it. This is because, as I suggested
earlier, there is something incomplete about the desire to
follow the rules or conventions of justice in general, in
the sense that it immediately arouses the question, "Why?"
Since the rules of justice are artificial, there can be no
natural desire, prior to the establishment of such rules,
to follow them. Given then that this is an artificial de-
sire, the demand for an explanation of this desire does not
seem to me misplaced. By "explanation", I do not mean a
genetic account of how men come to have this desire, but an
explanation why any man might regard the development of such
a desire as itself desirable. In other words, what is the

motive for having such a general desire to be just?

I think that the explanation must be that these rules are useful; the same reason, in fact, why the rules were es-tablished at all. The only other reasonable answer I can im-agine would be because they are morally correct, and I think, because of the artificial nature of these conventions, that the former answer is actually more appropriate. Once again, I think that this analysis involves a conflict with the cri-terion, that the underlying motive must not be a regard to the moral value of the action. To say that something is use-ful is not of course to say that it is morally valuable, and so to say that the underlying motive of the following of the rules of justice in general is the desire to follow them because they are useful is not the same as to say that it is the desire to follow them because they have moral value. However, the difference between a regard to the utility of an action and a regard to its moral worth seems to me to be insufficiently large to support the claim that the motive involves no regard to the worth of the action.[2] In any case, we still have Hume's statement that:

> we have no real or universal motive for observing
> the laws of equity, but the very equity and merit
> of that observance.   (T.483)

which seems to me to apply to the general case as well as to the particular. At the least then, the underlying motive in the general desire to act justly, or follow the rules of

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[2]Bernard Wand, in "Hume's Account of Moral Obligation" The Philosophical Quarterly, 1956, argues that appealing to the utility of an action is sufficiently different from appeal-ing to its moral value that Hume is free of the charge that he is contradicting himself at this point. I am more dubious about this point, and the strength of the distinction than Professor Wand.

justice in general, is the desire to follow them because they
are useful to achieving a wanted end; it is also possible,
but not necessary, to claim that this involves a regard to
the moral value of acting in such a way, just as the partic-
ular motives involve such a desire. And like the motive in
the particular case, the general motive involves a necessary
reference to the rules or conventions of justice.

I mentioned at an earlier point that it was possible
that a man could have a "blind" desire to follow the rules
of justice, both in general and in particular cases, without
there being any underlying motive or justification for having
such a desire. I do not think such blind desires are pos-
sible without at least some people having the sorts of mo-
tives I have been describing above, and I think that the lat-
ter are more properly regarded as the appropriate underlying
motives of the artificial virtues. However, there are some
passages in Hume which suggest that he would think that the
more desirable state of affairs would be one in which every-
one, or most people at least, had such blind desires to fol-
low the rules of justice, so that such desires were more like
those underlying the natural virtues than the ones I have
been describing here. Such desires or motives would still
involve the necessary reference to rules, but the regard to
the moral value or utility of the rules or of acting accord-
ing to the rules would fall away.

> For as parents easily observe, that a man is the
> more useful, both to himself and others, the
> greater degree of probity and honour he is endow'd
> with; and that those principles have greater force,
> when custom and education assist interest and re-
> flection: For these reasons they are induc'd to
> inculcate on their children, from their earliest
> infancy, the principles of probity, and teach them
> to regard the observance of those rules, by which

society is maintain'd, as worthy and honourable,
and their violation as base and infamous. By this
means the sentiments of honour may take root in
their tender minds, and acquire such firmness and
solidity, that they may fall little short of those
principles, which are the most essential to our
natures, and the most deeply radicated in our inter-
nal constitution.   (T.500-501)

I take this to mean that the artificial virtues can attain
almost the same degree of "naturalness" as the natural, under
suitable education, and that this is a desirable end. How-
ever, given that this is only possible with education, I
would still argue that such unreflecting motives are secon-
dary to the original ones I have discussed above.

As a slight diversion, it might be noted that if Hume
really did regard as desirable the inculcating of the arti-
ficial virtues in such a way as to eliminate the regard to
the utility or moral value of acting in such a fashion from
the motive underlying the virtue, then there is even less
reason for considering him a Utilitarian than one might al-
ready have thought. The Utilitarian is, after all, normally
supposed to act from the desire to produce the greatest
amount of happiness (to put the point briefly and avoid all
the obvious difficulties involved in formulating the Util-
itarian position), which would appear to involve always con-
sidering the utility or value of his actions before acting.
Hume, it might be suggested, wants to eliminate as much of
that sort of consideration as possible, and hence could not
really be considered a Utilitarian at all.

I have thus concluded that the motives underlying
the artificial virtue of justice probably fail to meet both
of the criteria Hume appeared to consider necessary for the
motives underlying virtues; they do not appear to exist in
human nature prior to their being considered of moral value,

and they do include a regard to the moral worth of the action following from them, or of acting from such a motive. Can Hume's position be rescued at all? Perhaps one could argue that this is what is meant by an _artificial_ virtue: a virtue which is founded upon the moral value which will result from its existence, in contrast to a _natural_ virtue, upon which is founded the moral value. The artificial virtue may consist in the habitual desire to perform acts in accordance with the rules of justice, without a necessary reference to their moral worth (not necessary because the desire has become habitual), this desire having been developed because of the recognized moral value of such a desire. However, even this involves at some stage a reference to moral value. If one argues this way, then the points which Hume makes about motives existing in human nature, and not involving reference to moral value, are only applicable to the natural virtues, and the artificial virtues are a different sort of virtue altogether.

If the artificial virtues are distinct from the natural virtues, then the motives underlying the artificial virtues are distinct from the motives underlying the natural virtues. I have already suggested this point, and I think that Hume's account of morality necessarily involves this distinction. In this analysis of what Hume's theory necessarily involves, I differ from the analysis given by Ardal, who argues, in a passage which I quoted earlier, that

> the judgment or understanding do not give rise
> to any new motive, which opposes, and can be
> contrasted with, the passions. The understand-
> ing changes only the _direction_ of the passions.

I take from this that Ardal's position is that when

> nature provides a remedy in the judgment and
> understanding, for what is irregular and incom-
> modious in the affections   (T.489

in the production of the artificial virtues, no new motives
are produced which underlie the artificial virtues, but
rather, the direction of the motives which underlie the
natural virtues is simply changed. I do not think this is
an accurate account of what Hume had in mind. In the first
place, Hume himself argues, in his discussion of promise-
keeping, which he classifies as an artificial virtue, that
promises

> are the conventions of men, which create a new
> motive, when experience has taught us, that hu-
> man affairs wou'd be conducted much more for mu-
> tual advantage....   (T.522)
>   (italics mine)

Secondly, there are a number of other arguments, not taken
directly from Hume, but deducible from his general account,
that suggest that the theory requires that the motives be
different, or distinct from the motives underlying the
natural virtues.

In the case of the natural virtues, there is not much
difference between a general desire to, say, perform actions
which will help people who are in difficulties, and a col-
lection of specific desires to help people in difficulty in
specific situations. I argued earlier that either would do
as an account of having a disposition to have benevolent
motives, since the former is really just a generalization
of the latter. However, if I am right in arguing that the
motive for following the rules of justice in general is a
desire to do something which is useful, whereas the desire
to be just in a particular situation is to be analyzed as
a desire to follow the rules of justice, it cannot be said
that the former is merely a generalization of the latter...
the situation is at least slightly different. There is

thus that difference between motives underlying natural and
artificial virtues, that in the former case, the content of
general and specific desires appropriate to them is similar,
while in the latter case this is not entirely true.

There is secondly the point that the desire to help
someone in difficulty is a radically different sort of de-
sire from the desire to follow a set of rules. The first de-
sire can be regarded as a desire to do something as an end
in itself, whereas the second cannot be so regarded, or at
the least, cannot be so regarded with any degree of comfort;
-- the question "Why?" seems highly applicable in the second
case, and somewhat inappropriate in the first. Furthermore,
the desire to follow a set of rules presupposes the existence
of a set of rules, whereas the desire to help someone does
not, even though it may be true in some situations that the
latter desire cannot be put into action without knowledge of
some rules (the desire, for example, to help a man who has
gone bankrupt). In the case of the artificial virtues,
moreover, the desire cannot exist without prior recognition
of the existence of the convention or rules. For example,
one cannot desire to be just without recognizing that there
is such a thing as justice, which in Humean terms is the
set of rules or conventions in the society. One cannot de-
sire to be chaste, without recognizing the existence of
chastity, again to be accounted for in terms of conventions
in a society. One can, however, desire to help someone
without having an analogous sort of knowledge of conventions
or rules. Thus, although in many cases rules or conventions
may be relevant to carrying out the desires typical of the
natural virtues, in the case of the artificial virtues,

knowledge of at least the existence of such rules is neces-
sary not only for carrying out the desires, but also for
having the desires.

All of these points suggest that the motives under-
lying the virtue of justice are not redirected versions of
the motives underlying the virtue of benevolence and pru-
dence, but are distinctly different _sorts_ of motives, and
thus different motives. The desire to follow a set of rules
is not just a redirection of the desire to help people, --
in many cases it may simply conflict with the desire to help
people, not only on a short-range, but also on a long-range
basis.

Thus, on the basis of my analysis of Hume's theory
to this point, I would claim that the motives underlying the
artificial virtues are distinct and different from the mo-
tives underlying the natural virtues. The question of how
closely my analysis conforms to what Hume himself says on
the matter is difficult to answer, since much of what he
says conflicts with other things that he says, and on the
basis of just what he says, both my interpretation and
Ardal's are plausible. However, in the long run I think
the theory requires my interpretation. However, I do not
think, as has been suggested by at least one commentator,
that the difference between the natural and the artificial
virtues is on the basis of the "objects" of the virtues.
John B. Stewart suggests that the natural virtues are con-
cerned with personal relationships, whereas the artificial
virtues are concerned with social relationships.[3] It is

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[3]Stewart, J.B. The Moral and Political Philosophy of David
Hume, New York and London, Columbia U. Press, 1963, p. 105.

possible to see how Stewart arrived at this idea, since it
would seem, on first consideration, that relationships be-
tween individual people would be less likely to be governed
by rules or conventions than would relationships between
people in so far as they are members of a society. However,
even though it is not entirely clear what the difference is
between social and personal relations, it would seem to me
that chastity, an artificial virtue according to Hume, surely
has more to do with personal than social relationships.
Charity, on the other hand, a natural virtue, might well be
regarded as having more to do with social than personal re-
lationships.

Stewart also, incidentally, suggests that the dis-
tinction is that the natural virtues are manifestations of
feelings for other persons, whereas the artificial virtue
are manifestations of feelings for economic goods.[4] But
surely chastity, again, and good manners, two of the artifi-
cial virtues, are only in the most unlikely sense manifes-
tations of feelings for economic goods, whereas frugality,
a natural virtue, probably is. It is less clear how this
idea may have arisen. In any case, I am sure that this is
the wrong way to approach the problem. The artificial vir-
tues, and the motives underlying them, are not, I think, to
be distinguished by the "objects" of the virtues, but by
the ways the rules or conventions are logically related to
the motives.

To summarize to this point: I have attempted to
make a distinction between the natural and the artificial

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[4]Ibid., p. 102.

virtues, on the basis of the motives underlying them. I have argued that there are the following differences between the two sorts of motives; that the motives underlying the artificial virtues presuppose a recognition of the existence of rules or conventions in a society, and also a recognition that these rules are useful, and possibly that they have moral value, whereas the motives underlying the natural virtues presuppose none of these things; that there is no worthwhile distinction to be made, in the case of the natural virtues, between the general desire to do a particular kind of action, and the disposition to have particular desires to do actions of that kind, whereas, in the case of the artificial virtues, there is such a distinction; and finally, that the motives underlying the artificial virtues involve a necessary reference to a set of rules, whereas the natural virtues do not. I have also argued that the motives underlying the artificial virtues are not merely a redirection of the motives typical of the natural motives, but are actually new and distinct motives. All of these points lead me to conclude that the motives underlying the artificial virtues, since they could not exist prior to the establishment of conventions, could not 'exist' in human nature...distinct from the sense of [their] morality.

A final problem I would like to mention with regard to the natural and artificial virtues is that of accounting for the value placed upon these virtues. Hume says that

> An action, or sentiment, or character is virtuous
> or vicious; why? because its view causes a pleas-
> ure or uneasiness of a particular kind. In giving
> a reason, therefore, for the pleasure or uneasiness,
> we sufficiently explain the vice or virtue. (T.471)

and;

> everything, which gives uneasiness in human actions,...
> is call'd Vice, and whatever produces satisfaction,
> in the same manner, is denominated Virtue.... (T.499)

The problem then is to discover why it is that certain qualities arouse in the observer the appropriate feelings of pleasure or satisfaction, pain or uneasiness. The answer to this question is given at the end of the Treatise, as one of the conclusions:

> Virtue is consider'd as means to an end. Means to
> an end are only valued so far as the end is valued.
> ...the sentiment of approbation, which arises from
> the survey of all those virtues, that are useful to
> society, or to the person possess'd of them. These
> form the most considerable part of morality. (T.619)

We are also told:

> This pleasure [virtue] and this pain [vice] may
> arise from four different sources. For we reap
> a pleasure from the view of a character, which
> is naturally fitted to be useful to others, or
> to the person himself, or which is agreeable to
> others, or to the person himself.   (T.591)

The reason, then, that a character is valued morally is that it is useful or agreeable. The agreeability criterion does not present much difficulty in itself, except for the fact that it might seem to allow too much into morality. However, saying that something is useful immediately suggests the question "Useful for what?" This is a question that Hume does not appear to have ever considered. However, I suppose we might say, useful for getting what people want, or fulfilling people's desires. This of course presupposes that people have various wants or desires, but I think this can be taken as given, both by us, and by Hume, one would assume. A character is thus morally valued if it is useful for, or leads to, the fulfillment of certain desires that people have. Is this account compatible with Hume's claim that:

no action can be virtuous, or morally good, unless
there be in human nature some motive to produce it,
distinct from the sense of its morality.   (T.479)

The virtues, I have claimed, are analyzable in terms of mo-
tives, or dispositions to have motives of a certain kind.
Motives lead to actions, and it would seem reasonable to say
that it is actions which fulfill people's desires, and not
the motives per se. So it would seem that certain char-
acters are useful because they lead to actions which ful-
fill people's desires, and further, that this is why they
are regarded with moral approval, and said to have moral
value. It might make more sense to describe the situation
by saying that it is certain states of affairs which are
initially valuable: that is, those states of affairs in
which desires are fulfilled, and the value of certain mo-
tives derives from the fact that they lead to the produc-
tion of these states of affairs. The difference between
the natural and artificial virtues would then be that the
motives underlying the natural virtues were those that were
motives to do some action which would immediately fill some
human desire, whereas the motives underlying the artificial
virtues were motives to do some action which would only
indirectly, by means of the general result of some conven-
tion being followed in society, fulfill desires. This
account does not appear to be inconsistent with any account
of the natural and artificial virtues given so far. What
it might appear to be inconsistent with is Hume's insis-
tence that it is motives, and not actions, which are the
subject of moral value, and that actions only derive their
value from the motives. My account might be read to suggest
that the motives derive their value from the actions, or

at least from the results of the action, rather than the
other way around.

Perhaps what is misleading in the suggested account,
however, is the emphasis on actions. As I have argued ear-
lier, the motives underlying the virtues are best described
as motives to achieve a certain purpose, and not to do a
specific action. For example, the motives underlying the
virtue of benevolence are desires to help a person, more or
less, and not the desire to throw him a rope, although in
certain situations throwing him a rope may well be the best
way to help him. The same, I believe, is true of the arti-
ficial virtues. Thus one might eliminate the action from
the motive-action-state of affairs account of the derivation
of value, and argue that the motive derives its value from
being productive of a desirable state of affairs. This
account allows one to agree with Hume that an action derives
its moral value from the motive behind it. After all, an
action which may have moral value in one situation would
not in another, since it depends on the situation in which
the action is performed. To loan a man a jersey may well
be the act of a benevolent person, when the man in question
is chilly, but it will hardly do when what he actually needs
is a fan. The motive can be the same in two different si-
tuations, for example, to ease a man's discomfort, and the
state of affairs brought about by the actions resulting
from the motive the same, for example, the man's discomfort
eased, but the actions entirely different, for example,
loaning him a jersey or a fan.

It is thus possible to meet this requirement of
Hume's -- a requirement I regard as perfectly reasonable,

and still claim that the motive derives its value from the
state of affairs of which it is productive. As well, this
account does allow one to make sense of the criterion that
a character is morally valuable if it is useful, since it
answers the question, "Useful for what?" The meaning of
"derives" is, however, somewhat different here than when it
is used in "an action derives its moral value from the mo-
tive". In the latter case, we are saying that an action is
morally valuable because it results from a morally valuable
motive; in the former, that a motive is morally valuable
because it leads to a desirable, but not necessarily morally
valuable, state of affairs. This I think is the sense of
Hume's account, if not the actual word. The motive thus
is the point at which moral value, so to speak, begins. A
motive or character is regarded with that appropriate feel-
ing of moral approval when it is seen to lead to a state of
affairs which is desirable.

The difference between the natural and artificial
virtues could, under this account be described as the dif-
ference between having the motives directly productive of
a desirable state of affairs, and the motives only indirectly
so productive. The virtue of benevolence, for example,
is the disposition to have motives which lead directly to
a desirable state of affairs, such as making someone happy.
On the other hand, the artificial virtue of justice is the
disposition to have the motive to follow the rules or con-
ventions of justice, which would not in itself lead to a
desirable state of affairs unless, first of all, there
were such rules, (a presupposition of there being any such
desires, of course) and these rules were generally followed.

Again, this makes it clear that the motives underlying the artificial virtues are distinct from those underlying the natural virtues. Moreover, if we consider the problem from the point of view of the pleasure aroused in the observer, it would appear to be the case that the reason an artificial virtue would be approved would be because it would be recognised to lead to a desirable state of affairs, albeit indirectly. This indirect aspect again at least suggests that part of the motive for acting in conformity with the rules of, say, justice, is the recognition that doing so is useful, although it certainly does not establish the case. However, if the motive for acting is to produce some state of affairs which is regarded as desirable, then this very indirectness about the artificial virtues suggests some degree of recognition that a desirable end will be reached in such an indirect fashion. At the least, this recognition makes the motives underlying the artificial virtues more complicated than the motives underlying the natural virtues, as well as suggesting that they may well violate Hume's criterion that they must not include a reference to the moral value of the actions to follow.

In the end, then, I would argue that the motives underlying the artificial virtues are distinct from, and have a different logical structure than, the motives underlying the natural virtues, and are not simply redirected versions of the latter.

As I have suggested earlier in this chapter, the distinction between the artificial and natural virtues can perhaps be considered from another point of view besides that of the nature of the motives underlying them. This

is the point of view of the observer, that is the man who
morally approves or disapproves of certain characteristics.
Characteristics are approved, Hume says, if they are useful
or agreeable to the person himself, or to those who have any
connexion with him. (T.591) He further argues that

> Virtue is consider'd as means to an end. Means to
> an end are valued so far as the end is valued. (T.619)

and that

> the reflecting on the tendency of characters and
> mental qualities, is sufficient to give us the
> sentiments of approbation and blame. Now as the
> means to an end can only be agreeable, where the
> end is agreeable.... (T.577)

He would thus appear to be arguing that the reason <u>why</u> any
particular characteristic is regarded as a virtue, or with
moral approval, is because it leads to an end which is de-
sirable. I do not think that he is arguing that a conscious
connection is made, in the manner of simple utilitarianism,
such that an agent must first decide whether or not a char-
acteristic is useful, or leads to an agreeable end, before
he can decide that such a characteristic is morally valu-
able. Rather, I would claim that he is arguing that this
is a fact of human nature, that people do naturally feel
moral approval towards those characteristics which lead to
desirable ends. He appears to regard it as a causal connec-
tion, rather than a rational inference:

> it being an inviolable maxim of philosophy, that
> where any particular <u>cause</u> is sufficient for an
> effect, we ought to rest satisfied with it, and
> not to multiply causes without necessity. We
> have happily attain'd experiments in the artifi-
> cial virtues, where the tendency of qualities to
> the good of society, is the sole <u>cause</u> of our
> approbation.... (T.578)
> (Italics mine)

Although it is not a logical inference from the fact that
a characteristic leads to a desirable end, to the fact that

it is morally valuable, it would still seem to be the case that the observer must be able to recognise that the characteristic leads to a desirable end, since surely it is the observer's recognition of the fact that it leads to a desirable end, and not just the fact that it does so lead, that causes him to morally approve the characteristic. The latter case just does not make sense.

This analysis would seem to conflict with a number of things which Hume says about the immediacy of moral feelings. For example, he argues that:

> some qualities acquire their merit from their being immediately agreeable to others, without any tendency to the public interest; so some are denominated virtuous from their being immediately agreeable to the person himself, who possesses them.   (T.590)

However, these qualities which are immediately agreeable seem to be regarded by Hume as being in the minority; -- or at least, those qualities whose moral virtue depends upon their being immediately agreeable are fewer in number than those whose moral virtue lies in their being useful to the attaining of some desirable end.

> I am also of the opinion, that reflexions on the tendencies of actions have by far the greatest influence, and determine all the great lines of duty.   (T.590)

In any case, it is only some natural virtues which are immediately agreeable, and derive their value from this, since the artificial virtues all derive their value from their utility. It would seem then that there are two different kinds of moral virtues, as seen from the point of view of the observer. There are first of all those qualities of mind which arouse immediate pleasure in the observer, without considering the ends to which they lead. These qualities appear to be a small class of the natural virtues. Secondly

there are those qualities, the reflecting upon the ends to
which they contribute, cause them to be regarded with moral
approval. These qualities include all of the artificial
virtues, and the remainder of the natural virtues. A dis-
tinction between the artificial and natural virtues can thus
not be made on the grounds of whether or not the quality of
mind called a virtue is immediately agreeable, since some
natural virtues it would seem are not.

However, it is clear that except in the case of those
natural virtues whose moral value lies in their immediate
agreeability, the cause of the moral value attributed to the
virtues is the recognition of the desirable ends to which
they lead. In this regard, Hume says that:

> The only difference betwixt the natural virtues and
> justice lies in this, that the good, which results
> from the former, arises from every single act, and is
> the object of some natural passion; Whereas a single
> act of justice, consider'd in itself, may often be
> contrary to the public good; and 'tis only the con-
> currence of mankind, in a general scheme or system
> of action, which is advantageous.   (T.579)

The point about the good being a result of some natural pas-
sion is, I believe, a reference to the fact that the motives
underlying the natural virtues exist "normally" in humans,
whereas those underlying the artificial virtues do not, and
are developed, as well as being distinct from the former
motives. This is, of course, the point I was discussing in
the previous section of this chapter. "Good", of course,
cannot be taken as meaning "morally good", since Hume is
quite clear that moral worth resides in motives, not in
actions. The point he is surely making is that the desir-
able state of affairs which results from the former is one
which is immediately obtainable by means of that action,
while the desirable state of affairs which results from the

latter is only obtainable if everyone adopts a certain pat-
tern of action. If this pattern of action is not fairly
universally adopted, then the state of affairs resulting from
the action might quite easily be undesirable rather than de-
sirable. Another way of putting it is that one can consider
a single action resulting from a natural virtue, by itself,
and on the basis of this, presumably, judge that the motive
which produced the action was morally valuable, whereas this
cannot be done in the case of the artificial virtues. In
the latter case the action must be considered as related to
a number of other relating actions, and the whole pattern
seen as desirable, before one would regard the motive produc-
ing it as being morally valuable. I am not trying to argue
here that the motive derives its moral value from the ac-
tion, -- this of course would conflict with one of Hume's
basic principles. Rather, I am arguing that if one considers,
as Hume does appear to, that motives are judged to be morally
valuable when they lead to a desired state of affairs, than
the state of affairs which is desired is more complex in the
case of the artificial virtues than in the case of the natural
virtues. It would then follow that if, as I have argued
above, the observer must be able to recognise that a quality
of character leads to a desired end before he can regard it
with moral approval in the case of all but a small class of
natural virtues, then he must, in the case of the artificial
virtues recognise that a certain pattern of conduct of which
the particular action is only an example, will lead to the
desired end, and not just that one particular action will do
so. The observer is thus more or less in the same position
as the agent in reference to the artificial virtues: both must

recognize the existence of a certain set of rules, the general following of which will lead to a desired state of affairs. This is a requirement which of course does not exist in the case of the natural virtues.

The moral value, then, that is given to the artificial virtues, is dependent on the existence and recognition of the value or usefulness of following a set of rules or conventions in reaching a desired state of affairs, whereas the moral value which is given to the natural virtues is dependent only on the recognition that the practice resulting from the virtue leads directly to a desired state of affairs. This is a parallel distinction to that made in reference to the motives underlying the natural and artificial virtues.

An interesting point which arises is the possibility of a conflict between the natural and the artificial virtues. Such a possibility is hinted at by Hume when he points out that

> a single act of justice, consider'd in itself, may often be contrary to the public good....if we examine all the questions that come before any tribunal of justice, we shall find, that, considering each case apart, it wou'd as often be an instance of humanity to decide contrary to the laws of justice as conformable to them.   (T.579)

It would seem that if one were gifted with the virtues both of benevolence or humanity and of justice, there would be cases where the actions dictated by these virtues would be inconsistent. Part of the solution to this difficulty lies in the notion of taking a general point of view, a topic with which I will deal in chapter 6. However, the taking of a general point of view does not completely dissolve the conflict between acting benevolently and acting justly. Nor can one simply say, in reference to any and all particular

cases, that a person will in the end be better off, presum-
ably the object of benevolence, if he is treated in a manner
conforming to the rules of justice. As Hume points out in
the quotation above, very often it would be to the individual's
advantage to be treated in a manner contrary to the laws of
justice, although presumably the society as a whole would not
be better off if these rules were disregarded in a large num-
ber of cases. In a way, the conflict seen here is very much
like the conflict between act and rule utilitarianism, al-
though again I am not suggesting that Hume is a utilitarian.
As it has often been pointed out, it is very easy to construct
a case in which the breaking of a rule which is justified
in general on utilitarian grounds, can be itself justified
on utilitarian grounds. If no one sees me stealing the pen
from a large department store, to use an example of Blans-
hard's,[5] and the company never misses it, no one will be
harmed, the general practice of honesty will not be harmed
by my example, and I will be on the whole better off than
I was before. I have never been convinced by arguments which
attempt to show that in the long run, some harm will result
from such isolated actions. It is, of course, at this point
that considerations of justice, or points about the univer-
salizability of moral judgments, are introduced into simple
utilitarianism.

The similarity of this case with the problem I see
in Hume's distinction between natural and artificial virtues
is that just as rule and act utilitarianism may dictate

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[5]Blanshard, B., in De George, R.T. Ethics and Society, London,
Macmillan, 1968, p 11.

different course of action, so might justice and benevolence,
the former in both cases based on a general view of the ad-
vantages of following certain rules, the latter on a consid-
eration of a particular case by itself. Just as a simple
solution is not available in the utilitarianism case, I do
not believe it is available in the Humean case although the
notion of a general point of view discussed in chapter 6 does
give some assistance. There simply is a conflict between
what justice and what benevolence dictates that one do,... the
conflict depending to a large degree on whether one considers
a particular case on its own, or regards it as an example of
a kind of situation, and makes the judgment on that basis.

The possible conflict between justice and humanity
is the only one which Hume mentions, but one can easily con-
struct other possible cases. Charm, for example, which Hume
regards as a natural virtue, could easily come into conflict
with the dictates of modesty or chastity, which Hume regards
as artificial virtues. Promise-keeping, another artificial
virtue, could very easily, as we all know, come into conflict
with benevolence or frugality, and so forth.

It might be argued that these examples show no more
than that people frequently have conflicting desires or mo-
tives for acting, and that some virtues come into conflict
with others. The examples do of course show at least this
much, and Hume's theory, as a purported account of normal
moral life, would be seriously at fault if it did not allow
for, or made light of, the moral conflicts which people con-
stantly encounter. And it is of course true that natural
virtues can come into conflict with one another; -- gener-
osity and frugality, for example, or temperance and

magnanimity, and also artificial virtues with one another;
such as promise-keeping and justice, or promise-keeping and
"allegiance to nations". However, I think that conflicts
between natural virtues and artificial ones show a different
structure than conflicts between logically similar virtues.
This difference is concerned with the way the possible courses
of action following from the motives are evaluated. In the
case of a conflict between natural virtues, I think it can
be argued that the conflict can be expressed by saying that
the agent wants to do two different things; for example,
help a neighbour and save his own money. In the end, the
decision is made on the basis of which he wants to do most.
In the case of a conflict between two artificial virtues,
the agent presumably has the desires to follow two different
sets of conventions. As I have argued earlier, the justifi-
cation for desiring to follow either set of conventions is
the belief that the universal adherence to these conventions
will lead to a desired state of affairs. This, in a case
of conflict, it would seem that the decision could be made
on two different bases: either, which set of conventions
does he in the end want to follow the most (for example,
the keeping of promises may be so strongly instilled that
in cases of conflict the decision is always made in that
direction), or, which set of rules will lead to a more de-
sired state of affairs: an almost purely utilitarian con-
sideration. I do not think the latter sort of considera-
tion is really open in the case of the natural virtues,
if one is to remain consistent to the Humean scheme. How-
ever, in the case of a conflict between a natural and an
artificial virtue the situation becomes rather more

complicated. Here we have a conflict between two different
sorts of desires, that to do a certain kind of action, and
that to follow a set of rules because doing so will lead to
a desired state of affairs in the long run, although perhaps
not immediately. The conflict in this case becomes in a
sense one between short-term and long-term interests, both
the agent's and other persons', as well as between conflict-
ing desires, and it cannot really be resolved by just con-
sidering one level or aspect. That is, it is not just a case
of a conflict of desires, nor is it just a case of choosing
between two possible desired states of affairs. It is rather
more a case of choosing between following a desire or choosing
to do something which in the long run contributes to a desired
state of affairs.

From the point of view of the observer too, the same
sort of distinction holds. In the case of the natural vir-
tues, he views the virtue as leading to certain actions which
immediately produce desired states of affairs, a happy man,
having been given a gift, for example. In the case of the
artificial virtues he has to recognize that these virtues
lead to actions which will on the whole, but not necessarily
in every particular case, lead to a desired state of affairs,
particularly if these virtues are held by most of the popula-
tion. And so, in evaluating an agent's choice between acting
benevolently and justly, he too would have to balance out
the immediate from the long-run picture, and the particular
from the general cases.

In the end, what I think the possibility of this
kind of conflict between the natural and artificial virtues
shows, besides the existence of the standard moral dilemma,

is that the artificial virtues are a logically different kind of virtue from the natural virtues, and cannot simply be regarded as re-directed natural virtues. From whatever point of view one considers the situation, the considerations which serve to distinguish the two sorts of virtues make it clear that they are quite different and distinct ways of making moral decisions. In the end, I think the artificial virtues present a somewhat utilitarian view of morality, whereas the natural virtues remind the reader of a moral sense theory. Hume has of course had both positions attributed to him, with some justification, but not entirely accurately. This is a question I shall mention briefly in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 5

Sympathy

An important aspect of Hume's moral theory is his doctrine of sympathy:

> Thus it appears, that sympathy is a very powerful principle in human nature, that it has a great influence on our taste of beauty, and that it produces our sentiment of morals in all the artificial virtues.   (T.577-8)

As a matter of fact, Ardal claims that:

> the approval of all virtues depends upon our taking up an objective standpoint, that the imagination is involved, and thus sympathy with the effect the quality of mind in question would tend to have.[1]

It is obviously important to get a clear picture of this doctrine, and the role that the principle of sympathy plays in the forming of moral evaluations.

Sympathy, according to Hume, is a principle of human nature, and not a passion. That he does not mean by "sympathy" something analogous to pity, or the expression of sympathy, as with others in time of trouble, is a point adequately made by Ardal,[2] and I will not repeat Ardal's work on this subject. Sympathy, in the Humean sense is not to be regarded as an emotion. It is a principle which accounts for the communication of ideas, opinions and emotions from one person or group of people to another person or group, in much the same ways as the principles of resemblance, contiguity and cause and effect account for the relations of ideas in Hume's epistemology. Sympathy is thus a process,

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[1] Ardal, op.cit., p. 151.

[2] ibid., p. 48 ff.

rather than an emotion. The details of the operation of this process have been well discussed by Ardal, above, and Norman Kemp Smith, in The Philosophy of David Hume, and since I have nothing important to add to their accounts, what follows will merely be a summary, necessary for the rest of this chapter.

Presupposed in the doctrine of sympathy is Hume's analysis of ideas and impressions. In particular, we have the fact that the distinction between ideas and impressions is made in terms of vivacity of force, impressions being more vivacious or forceful than ideas. Impressions are taken to include not only the sensations of external sense perception, but also internal sensations of emotions, passions, etc. There are of course serious problems with the manner in which Hume makes this distinction, (in the end, I think it is actually incoherent,) but this is the distinction presupposed in this section. All ideas are derived from impressions; no person can have ideas without having had the appropriate impressions from which these ideas are derived. In certain cases, that is, of simple ideas, this derivation is a copying, Hume claiming that no one can have a simple idea without having previously had a phenomenologically similar impression. This is a point of some importance in moral evaluation.

Another aspect of Hume's epistemology which plays a significant role in his account of sympathy is the similarity of reaction among most humans. As I mentioned earlier, when discussing Hume's account of free will and determinism, he argues that most humans, when placed in similar situations, display similar behaviour, feel similarly, and so forth. This similarity acts as the foundation for our beliefs about other people's beliefs, feelings, etc. Since all that one

person can be directly aware of about another person is his

perceptible behaviour, and not his motives or passions,

Hume argues that the only way we can reach any conclusions

about another person's feelings is by analogy with our own,

on the supposition that similar feelings accompany similar

behaviour.

> Now 'tis obvious, that nature has preserv'd a great
> resemblance among all human creatures, and that we
> never remark any passion or principle in others, of
> which, in some degree or other, we may not find a
> parallel in ourselves. (T.318)

From the observation of behaviour, then, the observer is led

to think of himself exhibiting similar behaviour, and then

to think of the passions, emotions or motives which usually,

in himself, accompany this behaviour. From this, he reaches

the conclusion that the agent is experiencing similar pas-

sions, emotions, or motives.

> 'Tis indeed evident, that when we sympathize with the
> passions and sentiments of others, these movements ap-
> pear at first in our mind as mere ideas, and are con-
> ceiv'd to belong to another person, as we conceive any
> other matter of fact. 'Tis also evident, that the
> ideas of the affections of others are converted into
> the very impressions they represent, and that the pas-
> sions arise in conformity to the images we form of
> them. (T.319)

The process of sympathy is thus the enlivening of certain

ideas of passions, as seen in another person.,to the actual

passions themselves, in the observer. It is of course true,

that since all ideas are derived from impressions, this

process cannot occur without the observer having himself

previously having experienced these passions, emotions or

motives. If he had not, he could never reach the idea of

their existence in another person. Thus, it is impossible

to sympathize, in the Humean sense, with passions one has

never had oneself.

The means by which these ideas of passions are en-
livened into passions themselves leads to a problem of con-
sistency in Hume. He argues that

> 'Tis evident, that the idea, or rather impressions of
> ourselves is always intimately present with us,.....
> (T.317)

It is the liveliness of the impression of self that is con-
veyed to the idea of the passions, and since the only distinc-
tion between ideas and impressions is that the latter are
more lively than the former, once the idea is sufficiently
enlivened, it becomes itself an impression. Thus the ob-
server in a sense "shares" thepassions of the agent, in the
sense that they have similar passions. This is the operation
of sympathy, the sharing of passions by agent and obsever.

The problem which arises is of course that Hume says
earlier in the Treatise that we have no such thing as an
idea of impression of self.

> nor have we any idea of self, after the manner it
> is here explain'd. For from what impression could
> this idea be deriv'd?....It must be some one impres-
> sion, that gives rise to every real idea. But self
> or person is not any one impression...and conse-
> quently there is no such idea.   (T.251-2)

The only impressions we have, when we introspect, are partic-
ular impressions

> of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred,
> pain or pleasure.   (T.252)

The notion of personal identity, he claims,

> proceed[s] entirely from the smooth and uninterrupted
> process of the thought along a train of connected ideas,
> according to the principles above explained [resem-
> blance, contiguity and causation].   (T.260)

These passages do appear to conflict with several things he
says in the section on sympathy:

> that the idea, or rather impression of ourselves is
> always intimately present with us.   (T.317)

Ardal attempts a resolution of this problem, claiming that
Hume's earlier arguments, in Book I, are to the effect that
there is no one continuing particular impression that can be
identified as an impression of self. However,

> we can, at any time, identify a complex set of im-
> pressions which constitutes what we call our self
> at that particular time.[3]

These impressions are those of desires and passions, rather
than those of external sense, which are regarded as repre-
sentative of the external world. I think Ardal's interpreta-
tion is basically correct. Hume of course gives an answer
of sorts himself, later in the section (I, IV, VI) when he
discusses the source of our notion of personal identity.

> 'Tis evident, that the identity, which we attribute
> to the human mind, however perfect we may imagine
> it to be, is not able to run the several different
> perceptions into one...notwithstanding this distinc-
> tion and separability, we suppose the whole train of
> perceptions to be united in identity...whether it be
> something that really binds our several perceptions
> together or only associates their ideas in our imagi-
> nation.   (T.259)

It seems to me that what Hume is arguing in this section is
not that we do not have a sense of personal identity, or that
we are not conscious of ourselves, but that this sense of
identity is not based upon a perception of identity, or of
unity, that is, a single, unchanging perception of the self.
Much as he argues that our notions of causation are not based
upon a perception of causation, but are rather a confused
mixture of, and inference based upon, a number of other per-
ceptions, at the same time as admitting that we do after all
operate almost all our lives on the notion of cause and
effect, so, I think, he is arguing that the basis of our

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[3]Ibid., p. 44.

notion of personal identity is not a single perception, even
though we do have such a notion. I do not really see that
there is a problem of reconciling what Hume says about per-
sonal identity with what he says about sympathy. Doubtless
he ought not to have used the phrase "impression of self",
which is certainly misleading, but I do not think in the end
the two sections are really inconsistent. In reference to
the operation of sympathy, what enlivens the idea of certain
passions, emotions or motives into their corresponding impres-
sions is not so much a single impression of the self, but the
impressions of passions, etc., which are always present in
the mind, and are identified as being part of the self. It
is Hume's contention that the operation of sympathy is a
necessary constituent of moral approval or disapproval. With-
out sympathy, although pleasure or pain is felt on the obser-
vation of certain characteristics of mind, this pleasure or
pain is not truly to be identified with moral approval or
disapproval.

The first thing to do is to examine the role that
sympathy plays in moral approval or disapproval. It is clear
that the operation of sympathy alone is not sufficient to
ensure that moral approval or disapproval is taking place.
It is also the source of pity, a cause of love of relations
and acquaintances, and a source of our sense of beauty. It
can cause us to "share" the pain of a person suffering, or
to "share" the pleasure of a person in possession of a work
of art. None of these is an example of moral evaluation,
even in Hume's wide-reaching view of morality. Thus the
operation of sympathy is only one aspect of the production
of those feelings identified with moral approval or disapproval.

It should also be pointed out again, here, that what are morally approved of are not actions, but motives, or rather virtues, which are analyzed in terms of motives. In discussing this aspect of Hume's theory, Ardal expresses some uneasiness at the identification of moods and motives which he attributes to Hume.[4] Hume clearly regards certain passions such as anger as being a suitable subject for moral disapproval, and Ardal argues that anger is not really a motive, in the way that, for example, desire to help someone is. I think part of the difficulty here is that Hume's position is not so much that motives are the subject of moral evaluation, as that qualities of mind or character are. Particular motives are considered to be representative of dispositions to have certain sorts of motives, and it is these dispositions which are virtues or vices. I have already argued (Chapter 2, and see the passages T477, and T.575, quoted there) that what Hume means to be the subject of moral evaluation, is not a specific motive behind a specific action, but rather the general quality of character which leads to certain types of action. Thus anger would count in the Humean scheme as subject to moral evaluation, since a general tendency to anger would certainly lead to the performance of certain sorts of actions, which in this case would in general cause pain to the agent himself or to others. Hence anger would be a vice. I would thus agree with Ardal, when he says that

> One must of course, be aware that the term 'motive'
> is being used in a somewhat extended sense when it
> is made to cover moods, such as anger. But those who

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[4]ibid., pp. 152-153.

think that Hume considers that we always evaluate
motives must be using the term in this extended
sense.[5]

I do not think, however, as Ardal gives the impressions of
doing, that a propensity to certain passions is unusual in
the Humean scheme of virtues and vices. Benevolence, the
chief example of a natural virtue, is of course a passion,
albeit a calm one, unlike anger. (T.417) If the subjects
of moral evaluation are qualities of mind which lead to the
fulfillment or lack of fulfillment of desires, then it would
seem to me that the propensity to a given passion is just
as likely a subject as any other human propensity which
leads to action.

Given then that the operation of sympathy is a nec-
essary condition of feeling moral approval or disapproval,
and that qualities or characteristics of mind are the sub-
ject of moral approval or disapproval, we have still to see
the role of the operation of sympathy in eliciting moral
approval or disapproval.

There are two basic reasons why the operation of
sympathy is necessary in Hume's theory. The first is that
it is possible to, and people clearly do, morally approve
or disapprove, of qualities of mind of people with whom they
have never, and could never, come into contact:

> we give the same approbation to the same moral
> qualities in <u>China</u> as in <u>England</u>   (T.581)

Since we are not directly affected by these qualities, there
must be some mechanism by which we come to feel the appropri-
ate pleasure or pain on viewing them. The second is that Hume

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[5]ibid., p. 152.

must account for our moral approbation of the artificial virtues, which do not lead directly to the state of affairs regarded as most desirable, and thus would not seem to arouse the appropriate feelings of pleasure. There is a third reason, which has to do with the necessity of taking a general point of view, which topic I shall discuss later. The role of sympathy is thus basically to allow the observer to feel the appropriate pleasure or pain as a result of the effects of a quality of mind, although he himself may not be directly affected by it.

With what elements of the moral situation do we then sympathize? Hume says that

> reflecting on the tendency of characters and mental qualities, is sufficient to give us the sentiments of approbation and blame. (T.577)

when speaking of those virtues whose value lies in the benefit they bring to society, -- that is, those virtues which are useful to those who have a connection with the agent, in Hume's four-fold distinction. This would suggest that the observer sympathizes with the feelings of pleasure or pain resulting from the effects of these characters and mental qualities, rather then with the characters or mental qualities themselves. This pleasure or pain is not itself moral approval or disapproval, but gives rise to further feelings of pleasure and pain which are approval or disapproval. This sort of explanation would also presumably be relevant to those virtues whose value lies in the fact that they are immediately agreeable to other people, such as wit and charm.

We also, Hume claims, sympathize with the feelings or passions of the agent, in reference to those virtues or

vices which are self-regarding, (useful or agreeable to the person himself,) rather than other-regarding. The parallel construction would be that the observer sympathizes with the feelings that the agent has as a result of having a certain character or quality of mind, and not with the actual feelings which constitute the virtue or vice.

The need for the operation of sympathy for the production of moral feelings is obvious in these two cases, so long as the observer is detached from the situation, and not involved in it. Obviously, if he is to feel the requisite pleasure or pain, there must be some basis for the arousal of these feelings, and the basis lies in the "shared" pleasure or pain. However, it has been argued that if the observer is involved, in certain cases, the operation of sympathy would be superfluous. In particular, this charge has been made by Ingemar Hendenius,[6] In general, I think Hendenius' charge might be broadened, to cover all of the other-regarding virtues, although in the end the doctrine of the general point of view, discussed in chapter 6, will lead me to reject his argument. I shall leave the discussion of this point until later in this chapter and until chapter 6.

Ardal, gives a good account of the operation of sympathy in each of the four cases: those qualities useful to the agent, those qualities agreeable to the agent, those qualities useful to people other than the agent, and those qualities agreeable to people other than the agent,[7] from which I will borrow a few points. In the case of qualities

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[6]Hendenius, Ingemar, Studies in Hume's Ethics, Uppsala, repr. from Adolf Phalen in memoriam, 1937, p. 398.

[7]op.cit., pp. 152-154.

useful to the agent, Hume says that:

> It seems evident that where a quality or habit is
> subjected to our examination, if it appears in any
> respect prejudicial to the person possessed of it,
> or such as incapacitates him for business and ac-
> tion, it is instantly blamed and ranked among his
> faults and imperfections.   (E.233)

and:

> If we examine the panegyrics that are commonly made
> of great men, we shall find, that most of the qual-
> ities, which are attributed to them, may be divided
> into two kinds, viz. such as make them perform their
> part in society; and such as render them service-
> able to themselves, and enable them to promote their
> own interest. Their prudence, temperance, frugality,
> industry, assiduity, enterprize, dexterity, are cel-
> ebrated as well as their generosity and humanity.
>   (T.537)

It would appear to be the case that one of the results of

having any of these self-regarding virtues is the arousal

of feelings of pleasure in the possessor at the results of

these virtues. Because he has these qualities, he is able

to "promote his own interest", and this will naturally give

him pleasure. It is with these resultant feelings of pleas-

ure that the observer sympathizes, and which are the basis

for his feelings of moral approval. And similarly, in the

case of such self-regarding vices as indolence, or

> a blundering understanding, and a wrong judgment
> of everything in life....   (T.537)

the results of the exercise of these vices is to make the

agent unhappy, and it is with his feelings of pain that the

observer sympathizes, giving rise to feelings of moral dis-

approval.

The other class of self-regarding virtues and vices

are those qualities immediately agreeable or disagreeable

to the agent. Hume says that:

> As some qualities acquire their merit from their
> being immediately agreeable to others, without

> any tendency to public interest; so some are de-
> nominated virtuous from their being <u>immediately
> agreeable</u> to the person himself, who possesses
> them. (T.590)

By "being immediately agreeable to the person himself" I
would presume that Hume means that the existence or opera-
tion of these qualities causes immediate pleasure to the
possessor. It is this resultant feeling of pleasure with
which the observer sympathizes, which gives rise to his
moral approval. It is not entirely clear, however, just
what sort of virtues and vices Hume has in mind at this
point, since he gives no specific examples. He does say
that:

> Each of the passions and operations of the mind has
> a particular feeling, which must be either agree-
> able or disagreeable. The first is virtuous, the
> second vicious. This particular feeling constitutes
> the very nature of the passion; and therefore needs
> not be accounted for. (T.590)

From this it could be argued that <u>all</u> passions are either
virtues or vices, from the point of view of whether they
are agreeable or disagreeable to the agent, and that this
criterion does not pick out any particular set of virtues
and vices. On the other hand, the previous quotation does
say "<u>some</u> are denominated virtuous", which does suggest that
a particular class is being discussed here. Ardal gives as
examples of this class of vices the passions of fear, anger,
dejection, grief, melancholy, and anxiety, arguing that it
is the propensity to have these passions which is the vice,
and not singular occurrences, which may sometimes be appro-
priate.[8] That the vice or virtue should be a propensity to
have certain kinds of passions fits in with the general

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[8] ibid., p. 152.

account of vices and virtues, as being tendencies to have certain kinds of motives or desires, rather than merely only occasionally having such desires or motives. The propensity to have desires, motives or passions which are pleasant in feeling would then be a virtue, while to have desires, motives or passions which are painful in feeling would then be a vice. If we are to take it that all desires, motives and passions have a "particular feeling, which must be either agreeable or disagreeable", then it would seem to follow that the propensity to have any particular sort of desires, motives or passions would be either a virtue or a vice. This of course broadens the area of virtues and vices rather more than most modern writers would countenance, although the emphasis on the propensity to have these passions makes the account rather more acceptable. A man does not have a vice if he is occasionally angry, but if he is constantly irascible, then he might reasonably be said to have a vice, and it is true that we morally disapprove to some degree of the irascible man. And likewise, a man is not virtuous because he is occasionally benevolent, but if he is constantly benevolent it seems reasonable to say that he has the virtue of benevolence, and to approve morally of him on this ground.

If any propensity to have certain motives, desires or passions counts as either a vice or virtue by this criterion, it would follow that the different criteria for moral value may overlap and that, as a matter of fact, a virtue or vice under any other criterion is also necessarily a virtue or vice under this criterion. Moreover, there seems to be no a priori reason why a character which is a virtue under one criterion could not be a vice under this other.

In other words, there seems no compelling reason to believe
that a tendency of character which might be a virtue under
the criterion of being useful to the possessor might not be
one whose "particular feeling" is one of pain, or a quality
which is a vice, under the criterion that it is detrimental
to those who come into contact with the agent, might not be
a quality whose particular feeling is one of pleasure. Hume
would presumably argue that this is never the case, citing
introspective data as his evidence, but I don't think that
this will quite answer the objection. There is first of all
the very serious problem about proving any facts based on
introspective data, a question I have touched on before.
More importantly, however, it would seem to conflict with
the facts.

If we take, for example, the vice of miserliness,
we can see the conflict. Miserliness could, and would, I
think by Hume, be regarded as a vice, on the grounds that
it was a quality detrimental to the possessor. It could
reasonably be said to be a quality which is detrimental to
those who have contact with him as well. However, it is
quite clear that this quality gives its possessor pleasure:

A miser receives delight from his money....   (T.314)
I think it must be agreed that the tendency to accumulate
money clearly gives the miser pleasure, and on these grounds,
it would seem that it should be counted as a virtue. On
other grounds. however, it as clearly counts as a vice. The
same must surely be true of any other vice which a man en-
joys, and it is certainly the case that there are qualities,
which under the Humean criteria would be called vices, which
are enjoyed. For example, an indolent man may not feel the

least pain as a result of his indolence. The men in Stein-
beck's <u>Cannery Row</u>, who only work when they run out of money
and credit, certainly do not feel any pain as a result of
their way of life. If this is the case, then either the ob-
server does not feel moral disapproval in this case, or he
must sympathize with some other sentiment of the agent, or,
thirdly, some other process must be in operation here. The
first possibility is unlikely, since people do, as a matter
of fact feel moral disapproval of idle men, and as a matter
of fact, feel it rather more strongly in reference to the
men who do not feel pain as a result of their own indolence
than to the men who do. Appealing to the feelings of other
observers, such as those who have any relationship to the
agent, will not solve this problem either, since their pain
or moral disapproval must rise from some source as well,
and the source is equally absent in the case in question.

The second possibility is that the observer is sym-
pathizing with some other feelings of the agent. However,
there seems, in the Humean system, no likely candidate for
this other feeling. The third possibility is that there is
some other process in operation, and this seems the most
plausible solution to the problem. At one point in his dis-
cussion of sympathy, Hume says:

> There remains only to take notice of a pretty re-
> markable phaenomenon. of this passion; which is,
> that the communicated passion of sympathy sometimes
> acquires strength from the weakness of the original,
> and <u>even arises by a transition from affections, which
> have no existence.</u>   (T.370,
>   italics mine)

This, he claims, occurs because:

> the imagination is affected by the <u>general rule,</u>
> and makes us conceive a lively idea of the pas-
> sion, or rather feel the passion itself, in the

the same manner, as if the person were really ac-
tuated by it.   (T.371)

If we ignore the problems of the "transition from affections,
which have no existence", this alternative process can be
applied to the case of the idle man. If it is true that in
general, the indolent man feels pain as the result of his
indolence, then in the exceptional case of the man who feels
no pain, the general rule comes into play, and we feel pain,
even though it is not justified on the basis of sympathy in
this case. This theory of course rests on the assumption
that generally, a man who has a self-regarding vice feels
pain as the result of it. This seems a not unreasonable
assumption, since if it were a quality of mind or character
which in general did not cause any pain to the possessor, and
was not detrimental to society (and since we are discussing
a self-regarding vice, this is an extraneous consideration),
then it would surely not be a vice, and not be morally dis-
approved. However, albeit not unreasonable, I am not en-
tirely happy about the assumption, since it seems to me that
a very large number of infrugal people, for example, are not
unhappy about their extravagance or made unhappy as a result
of their extravagance.

Hume does, however, explain why the observer might
disapprove more of the man with a vice who does not feel un-
happy as a result of it, than of the man who feels pain as
a result of it. His explanation calls into play the prin-
ciple of comparison, which is more or less the mirror image
of sympathy, in that the effect of comparison is for one
sentiment in the agent to bring into existence in the ob-
server the opposing sentiment: a sense of security causes
fear, as in the example of the infant prince (T.371) or

pleasure causes pain. The principle of comparison comes into play when the general rule is not followed in a specific instance, as for example in my case of the infrugal man who does not feel pain as a result of his extravagance. The general rule leads one to expect that he will feel pain as a result of it, the observer feels pain as a result of sympathy with the non-existent but expected sentiment, and the lack of pain felt by the agent, by the principle of comparison augments the feeling of pain in the observer. Hence the observer disapproves more strongly (on the assumption that the greater the pain he feels, the more he will disapprove as a result of it) of the infrugal man who is not unhappy than of the infrugal man who is. The solution is very neat; distressingly neat in fact, since the combination of the two opposing principles would seem to allow for anything at all happening, so that this aspect of Hume's theory is irrefutable; there could be no possible conflicting evidence. Any curious result whatsoever could be accounted for by some combination of the operation of the principles of sympathy and comparison.

Presumably the same sort of answer, involving the dual operations of the principles of sympathy and comparison, could be given to the problem I suggested earlier, about possibilities of conflicts between the different criteria. It could be claimed that those cases, in which I have argued a vice by any other criterion is a virtue by the one in question, are the exceptions to the general rule, and that the general rule is to be followed. However, I do not see any obvious support for the general rule in these cases, the general rule being that a vice by other criteria

will be a vice by the criterion of being disagreeable to the
possessor. The general rule is after all exactly what is in
question.

Perhaps the correct answer is simply that there are
sometimes conflicts, such that one would be in doubt whether
to call a particular characteristic a virtue or a vice, and
that such conflicts are necessarily engendered by the exis-
tence of more than one criterion for moral value. I would
myself tend to take this point of view, since surely one of
the facts of normal "moral life" is that not all cases are
clear-cut, and th.t conflicts do arise, depending on what
criteria are used for moral worth. This is of course to
argue that there is more than one criterion, a position I
would certainly hold. (I am not, incidentally, holding that
the criteria I would choose are necessarily those which Hume
uses.) Sometimes this conflict is expressed in a manner
which is particularly relevant to the examples I have been
using: "Well, it makes him happy, so there must be something
to be said for it". I would thus argue that although the
problem discussed here does lead one to the conclusion that
there is an inconsistency or a conflict between the various
criteria Hume gives for moral value, this conflict is justi-
fied if Hume's theory is considered to be descriptive of
normal moral life, where inconsistencies and conflicts do
exist. It is my belief, however, that Hume himself would
not be happy with this argument, since my reading of Hume
suggests to me that he is trying for consistency, not merely
in the sense of consistently describing people's inconsistent
beliefs, but in the sense of presenting consistent criteria,
and that he believes his account achieves it.

There is another possible problem with regard to the
self-regarding virtues and vices, which can be brought out
by considering the role of sympathy. In the case of quali-
ties useful or agreeable to the agent himself, the role of
sympathy would appear to be fairly obvious. Since men do
not have unlimited benevolence;

> In general, it may be affirm'd, that there is no
> such passion in human minds, as the love of man-
> kind, merely as such, independent of personal
> qualities, of services, or of relation to ourselves.
> (T.481)

the pain or pleasure of individuals unrelated to us would not
be a matter of concern unless there were some means of making
this pain or pleasure relevant to us. This is the role of
sympathy; to "transfer" to the observer the feelings of pain
or pleasure felt by the agent as the result of possessing
some quality or character, these "transferred" feelings serv-
ing as the basis for the arousal of feelings of moral ap-
proval or disapproval. This suggestion, however, that we
need the operation of sympathy in certain cases because we
do not feel unlimited benevolence towards all mankind leads
one to the conclusion that sympathy might not be needed for
the arousal of moral approval or disapproval in the cases of
qualities or characters possessed by people towards whom we
do feel benevolence, unless, of course, sympathy plays a
necessary role in benevolence itself. Benevolence is basi-
cally the desire that another person be happy, or be relieved
from pain, and to have these sorts of desires would not seem
to require the operation of sympathy, unless it were the case
that we could not know that another person was happy or un-
happy without the operation of sympathy. But this does not
seem a plausible view, since the operation of sympathy surely

itself presupposes the recognition of the feelings present in the agent. That is, before we can acquire feelings of pain or pleasure by means of the operation of sympathy, we must in some sense recognize that the agent has such feelings of pain or pleasure himself.

If benevolence does not require the operation of sympathy in order to exist, it would then seem to follow that in those cases where the observer feels benevolence toward the agent, he can feel moral approval or disapproval of qualities possessed by the agent without the operation of sympathy. However, I actually think this whole direction is misleading, and results from a misunderstanding of benevolence. The virtue of benevolence consists as I have argued earlier, of the tendency to have desires or motives of the sort: "He is in trouble, I want to help him" or "I want him to be happy". As a result of having these desires or motives, it is likely that the benevolent man will feel pleasure if the person who is the object of his benevolence is happy, and feel pain if that person is unhappy. However, these latter feelings of pleasure and pain are distinct from the desires typical of the virtue of benevolence. I would argue that these latter feelings of pleasure or pain could quite easily be attributed to the operation of sympathy, and if so, it would then follow that if it is these latter feelings which are the basis of moral approval or disapproval, rather than the feelings or desires typical of benevolence, then the observer would require the operation of sympathy to feel moral approval or disapproval even in the cases of those people towards whom he feels benevolence.

There are two points which I must establish here:

that the feelings of pleasure and pain felt by the observer,
if the person towards whom he feels benevolence is happy or
unhappy, are the result of the operation of sympathy; and
that it is these feelings which are the basis of the feelings
of moral approval or disapproval. To deal with the first
point: sympathy is the operation, (more or less,) of acquiring
the same feelings as the agent, by observing him and having
one's ideas of his feelings enlivened to actual feelings in
onself. In all of Hume's accounts of this operation, there
is a definite suggestion of a causal relationship here: in
some sense, "observing" the feelings of the agent causes the
the observer to have similar feelings. However, it will be
recalled that Hume's own account of causation reduces this
relationship basically to a matter of constant conjunction
and contiguity in time and space. Thus, to say that the
pleasure of the agent causes the corresponding pleasure in
the observer by a rather indirect process is only to say
that it universally occurs (other things being equal) that
if the agent has a feeling of pleasure or pain, the observer
does as well. And this description surely fits the case of
the benevolent man feeling pleasure or pain as well as it
fits the description of the operation of sympathy. In both
cases, the feeling of pleasure or pain felt by the agent
frequently or usually is followed by the corresponding feel-
ing in the observer. The detailed description that Hume
gives of the operation of sympathy does not appear to detract
from the argument that the two processes are, as a matter
of fact, the same.

Support can be lent to this argument by considering
the example of the vice of malice, which Hume describes as

the opposing passion to benevolence. Malice, he explains, operates by means of the principle of comparison, which, as we have already seen, is the mirror image, more or less, of the principle of sympathy:

> we must at least allow of the principle, from whence the discovery arose, that objects appear greater or lesser by a comparison with others...and 'tis from this principle I derive the passions of malice and envy. (T.375)

By means of the operation of the principle of comparison, the observer acquires the opposite passion to that which the agent has: pain instead of pleasure, happiness instead of unhappiness. This comes about when the observer compares the agent's happiness with his own misery, thus increasing his own misery, rather than acquiring the agent's happiness. If the principle of comparison plays such a large role in malice, it would not seem unlikely that the principle of sympathy would play a similar role in benevolence, resulting in the pleasure the observer feels at the recognition of the agent's pleasure. Although Hume, by saying that sympathy was needed in the production of feelings of moral approval or disapproval because men do not feel a general benevolence towards all mankind, would seem to be suggesting that where benevolence exists, sympathy is not necessary, I do not think this suggestion is to be followed. As a matter of fact, it would appear that the operation of sympathy has a role to play in benevolence, at least in that characteristic of the benevolent man, that he feels pleasure if his friend is happy, pain if he is not.

The second point which I said had to be established, is that the feelings of pleasure and pain felt by the observer, if the person towards whom he feels benevolence is happy or unhappy, are the feelings upon which are based the feelings

of moral approval or disapproval. This point I do not believe
to be contentious. I have earlier argued that the feelings
of the agent with which the observer sympathizes are the feel-
ings of pleasure or pain the agent has as a result of having
some virtue or vice. Surely these are just the sorts of feel-
ings which are under discussion here. In the end, then, I
do not think that this possible criticism of Hume's theory is
justified, and the theory is not inconsistent at least on
these grounds.

The question with which this discussion originally
began was the details of the operation of sympathy with ref-
erence to those virtues and vices whose moral value lies in
their being immediately agreeable or disagreeable to the
agent. Since Hume argues that every passion or operation of
the mind has a particular feeling which must be either agree-
able or disagreeable, it would seem to be these particular
feelings which are the obvious candidates for the operation
of sympathy. I have said earlier that the observer sympa-
thizes with the feelings of pleasure or pain the agent has
as a result of having certain passions, and although "result"
might be slightly misleading in this context, I think that
original account is more or less correct. The observer sym-
pathizes not with the actual passion, desire, and so forth,
but with the "feelings" which these operations of the mind
have. These feelings are, I think, to be regarded as logi-
cally distinct from the actual passions, desires, and so
forth, although they may universally accompany them. The
desire to help another person is not itself pleasure, al-
though this desire may be pleasant, and anger is not itself
pain, although to be angry may be painful. Thus the observer

sympathizes with the feelings of pleasure or pain which are
the "result" of having a certain passion, desire or motive.
The process of sympathy here is very similar to the process
with regard to the other self-regarding virtues and vices.

The other main class of virtues and vices, under the
four-fold distinction, is that of the other-regarding virtues
and vices. These are the virtues and vices whose moral value
lies in their being useful or agreeable, detrimental or dis-
agreeable, to those who have any contact with the agent. The
person, or people, on whom the principle of sympathy will
operate will thus not be the agent, but rather those whom he
affects. This, not surprisingly, makes the situation rather
more complex.

I will begin with the simpler case, those virtues and
vices whose value lies in their being immediately agreeable
or disagreeable to those people in contact with the agent.
Where sympathy is to operate in reference to this class of
virtues and vices, it must clearly be upon the feelings of
pleasure and pain that those people have as the result of
the agent's having a particular virtue or vice. This pleas-
ure is caused by the virtue or vice being immediately agree-
able or disagreeable to these people. However, in the case
of the other-regarding virtues and vices, it must surely be
the case that it is not so much the quality of mind or char-
acter which causes the pleasure or pain, but the actions of
the agent resulting from these qualities of mind or characters.
Hume does make a distinction between the motives or desires
for acting, and the subsequent actions, the motives or desires
being particular mental events. This can be seen both from
his insistence that it is the motives, and not the actions,

that are the subject of moral evaluation, and that motives

and other operations of the mind have particular phenomenol-

ogical characters:

> Each of the passions and operations of the mind has
> a particular feeling. (T.590)

however, it is surely the actions which are immediately agree-

able to others, and not the motives, since the motives are

private. The examples which Hume gives of this class of mo-

tives suggests this as well:

> There are, however, instances, in cases of less
> moment, wherein this immediate taste or senti-
> ment produces our approbation. Wit, and a certain
> easy and disengag'd behaviour, are qualities
> immediately agreeable to others, and command their
> love and esteem. (T.590)

The examples are obviously of behaviour, and although one

might find it difficult to locate or describe the appropriate

underlying motives for these particular kinds of behaviour, I

think it is obvious that Hume thought there must be such. It

is however, the behaviour which causes the feelings of pleas-

ure or pain with which the observer sympathizes in the process

of moral evaluation.

The other class of other-regarding virtues and vices

are those whose moral worth lies in their being useful or

detrimental to those who have any contact with the agent.

There are two different sorts of virtues and vices under

this criterion, the natural and the artificial, and it is

at this point that the distinction between artificial and

natural virtues becomes important in a discussion of sym-

pathy. I will once again begin with the simpler case, the

natural virtues. The distinction is particularly important

at this point because I believe that all the artificial

virtues fall into the class of qualities useful to other people

than the agent. Hume, for example says:

> Now justice is a moral virtue, merely because it
> has the tendency to the good of mankind, and, in-
> deed, is nothing but an artificial invention to
> that purpose. The same may be said of allegiance,
> of the laws of nations, of modesty, and of good
> manners.   (T.577)

Since this list given by Hume includes all the virtues which

he discusses in Part II, which is the section on the artifi-

cial virtues, except property and promise-keeping, whose

worth also clearly lies in their public utility, I believe

this classification of the artificial virtues is justified.

The natural virtues which would fall into the class

of qualities useful to other people would be such virtues as

benevolence, meekness, charity, generosity, clemency, modera-

tion and equity (T.578) and the source of our esteeem for

these virtues, Hume says, is their public utility:

> We have happily attain'd experiments in the arti-
> ficial virtues, where the tendency of qualities to
> the good of society, is the sole cause of our ap-
> probation....And where that principle may take place,
> and the quality approv'd of is really beneficial to
> society, a true philosopher will never require any
> other principle to account for the strongest approba-
> tion and esteem.

> That many of the natural virtues have this ten-
> dency to the good of society, no one can doubt of.
>   (T.578)

It would seem obvious, then, that these qualities, being

useful to society, would cause pleasure in their operation,

and it would be this pleasure with which the observer would

sympathize in the process of moral evaluations. Since the

natural virtues are immediately useful, in the sense that

they produce actions which themselves immediately are of

use; there is no difficulty in locating the pleasure or pain

with which the observer must sympathize.

> The only difference betwixt the natural vir-
> tues and justice lies in this, that the good,

which results from the former, arises from every
single act.   (T.579)

The agent with the virtue of, say, benevolence, has the de-
sire or motive to help other people, this desire or motive
results in an action which is helpful or useful to some per-
son or people other than himself, the helpful nature of the
action, or the action itself, causes pleasure in the other
person or people, and the observer sympathizes with this
pleasure, and feels moral approval. In some cases the ob-
server will sympathize with one person, in other cases, with
many. Hume's operation allows for both situations with no
difficulty. Thus, once again, the operation of sympathy is
fairly obvious and straightforward in this class.

There is, however, one possible problem connected
with the operation of sympathy in the other regarding vir-
tues, which I earlier suggested would arise. It has been
argued that if the observer is involved, in certain cases
the operation of sympathy would be superfluous. Ingemar
Hendenius makes the charge with reference to those quali-
ties immediately agreeable to others, but I think the charge
could be extended to all of the other-regarding virtues,
or at least to the natural virtues which fall within that
class.

A quality of mind which is useful to others could
be, it would seem, the subject of moral approval just on
the basis of its being helpful to the observer. It would
cause pleasure on that basis, and this pleasure, it would
seem, could arouse the feeling of moral approval as easily
as could the feeling of pleasure acquired by means of the
operation of sympathy. Ardal maintains that there is not
a problem here, using as part of his evidence a quotation

from the Enquiry:

> We approve of another, because of his wit, polie-
> ness, modesty, decency, or any agreeable quality
> which he possesses;...The idea, which we form of
> their effect on his acquaintance, has an agreeable
> influence on our imagination, and gives us the sen-
> timent of approbation. This principle enters into
> all the judgments which we form concerning manners
> and characters. (E.267)

He maintains that the principle referred to is clearly the

principle of sympathy, and therefore that Hume did not in-

tend that there be any exceptions to the necessity of the

operation of sympathy in the formation of moral evaluations.

In the first place, I do not think that what Hume intended

is entirely the question here, or the question which Hen-

denius was raising. Surely the question is whether or not

Hume's account of the role of sympathy in moral evaluation

is consistent, and the charge is that there seems no need

for the operation of sympathy in certain, at least, of the

other-regarding virtues.

In the second place, I do not regard it as being

quite so obvious as Ardal does that the principle being

referred to is that of sympathy. The quotation comes from

the section: "Of Qualities Immediately Agreeable to Others",

and I would think that a possible reading of the quotation

would suggest that the principle referred to is that quali-

ties immediately agreeable, in such matters as wit, charm,

and politeness, are approved of because they are immediately

agreeable; and that the tacit reference to the operation of

sympathy in the previous sentence is neither the main point

of the paragraph nor the reference for "this principle".

In any case, the passage is sufficiently ambiguous that I

would hesitate to pronounce one way or the other.

Ardal's second reason for rejecting Hendenius' charge has, to my mind, rather more foundation. He argues[9] that Hume's other necessary condition for moral evaluation is the taking of a general point of view, and that since taking a general point of view necessarily involves abstracting oneself from the situation and considering the question from some "middle distance", this process itself involves sympathy, and thus sympathy cannot be eliminated. I shall deal with this later, when I discuss the notion of the general point of view. In the meantime, if one ignores that aspect, it does appear to me that the operation of sympathy might well be regarded as redundant in the case of evaluating other-regarding virtues, particularly those whose value lies in their being immediately agreeable to people other than the agent.

It may be that this appearance of redundancy results from my own analysis of the reasons why sympathy is a necessary constituent of some moral judgments: that there must be some way for the observer to acquire, or have, the feelings of pleasure that arouse the feelings of moral approval. It could be argued, and I believe that this is behind Ardal's arguments which I criticized above, that Hume believed that sympathy just was a necessary condition for the arousal of feelings of moral approval. The problem with this view, however, is that it is somewhat arbitrary. Also, it is not clear to me that Hume actually held it. For example, he says:

But the happiness of strangers affects us by

_____

[9]ibid., p. 151.

> sympathy alone. To that principle, therefore, we
> are to ascribe the sentiment of approbation, which
> arises from the survey of all those virtues, that
> are useful to society, or to the person possess'd
> of them. These form the most considerable part of
> morality.   (T.619
>   italics mine)

and

> Thus it appears, that sympathy is a very powerful
> principle in human nature, that it has a great in-
> fluence on our taste of beauty, and that it produces
> our sentiments of morals in all the artificial vir-
> tues.   (T.577-8)

Both of these quotations suggest to me that Hume thought

that sympathy was necessary for the production of the feel-

ings of moral approval in the cases of a large number of

the virtues, but not in all, the obvious exceptions being

the natural virtues which are immediately agreeable. I

still do not see the need for sympathy in the case of those

natural virtues which are useful to persons other than the

agent, if the observer is immediately involved, but at the

very least, I believe Hendenius' position is justified by

the text, as well as by independent considerations of the

theory. I do not, however, regard this as as serious a flaw

in the theory as Hendenius and Ardal (if he were to admit

it existed) would appear to. Since there are two distinctly

different criteria for moral value in the Humean scheme:

qualities agreeable to qualities useful, and two different

kinds of virtues: natural and artificial, as well as a

basic division of virtues into self- and other-regarding,

it should not be very surprising that the feelings of moral

approval may be aroused in different cases by slightly dif-

ferent processes. On the contrary, it would be rather sur-

prising if there were not that sort of difference.

In the case of the artificial virtues, however, it

is clear that sympathy is absolutely necessary for the arousal
of feelings of moral approval and disapproval. Unlike the
natural virtues, the artificial virtues would not appear to
produce pleasure in such a direct fashion, and the operation
of sympathy becomes correspondingly more complex.

> Whereas a single act of justice, consider'd in it-
> self, may often be contrary to the public good; and
> 'tis only the concurrence of mankind, in a general
> scheme or system of action, which is advantageous....
> The whole scheme, however, of law and justice is
> advantageous to the society....After it is once es-
> tablish'd by these conventions, it is naturally at-
> tended with a strong sentiment of morals; which can
> proceed from nothing but our sympathy with the in-
> terests of society.   (T.579-80)

It is thus obvious that a single act of justice does not
necessarily result in feelings of pleasure for those who
have contact with the agent, nor is it expected to, and thus
one cannot appeal to any general rule in establishing the
existence of the feelings with which the observer is to
sympathize. In most cases the feelings which would be
appropriate to eliciting moral approval or disapproval
simply are not there. However, it is clear that sympathy
does operate in this case. Hume argues that:

> Now as the means to an end can only be agreeable, where
> the end is agreeable; and as the good of society,
> where our own interest is not concern'd, or that
> of our friends, pleases only by sympathy: It fol-
> lows, that sympathy is the source of the esteem,
> which we pay to all the artificial virtues.   (T.577)

The pleasure with which the observer must sympathise is the
pleasure of the whole of society, which results from the
general establishment and following of certain conventions.
If this is the case, then the process of sympathy in the
case of the artificial virtues becomes rather complicated.
The observer obviously must first recognise that a partic-
ular action, or set of actions, falls within the dictates

of an established convention, and that this established con-
vention contributes to the good of society, in the sense
that it contributes to the pleasure or happiness of society.
It is then this postulated happiness or pleasure with which
the observer sympathizes, and not any immediate pleasure or
pain resulting from the actions conforming to the convention.
The process of sympathy in this case is thus, at the very
least, more than just a mechanical transfer of feelings from
one individual or group of individuals to another person or
group.

To complicate the issue further, there is the point
which Hume makes, that:

> Whereas a single act of justice, consider'd in it-
> self, may often be contrary to the public good...
> (T.579)

Not only must the observer consider a given action as one of
a class of actions, and consider the general effect of this
class of actions, and not of any individual action within the
class, but he must also, it would appear, reject what must
be his immediate feelings, which might give rise to an op-
posing moral judgment. In such cases as Hume cites: taking
from the poor man to give to the rich, bestowing on the dis-
solute the labour of the industrious, and so forth, it would
seem that the observer should sympathize with the pain
caused by the agent, and morally disapprove of him on the
grounds that he has a character which is disadvantageous
to those who come into contact with him, or, in other words
because he has a vice under the very criterion under dis-
cussion here. Surely the tendency to desire to do such
things as to take from the poor to give to the rich would
count as a vice. The basis for this moral evaluation would

be the simpler operation of sympathy, for which the observer need only sympathize with the feelings which result from the operation of this motive by itself, and not as a member of a class of motives based on an artificial convention.

Since the subject of moral evaluation is the motive underlying the action, and not the action itself, the choice between the two conflicting moral evaluations appears to lie in a decision about the nature of the motive of the agent. In other words, the basic difference is whether or not the action resulted from a desire to give to the rich by taking from the poor, or a desire to act in conformity with the rules of justice. If this is the case, the moral evaluation is not so much based on a sympathetic transfer of feelings, although this is of course a necessary condition, as upon the observer's belief about the agent's motive. This would fit in with my earlier account of the motives underlying the artificial virtues. I argued there (Chapter 4) that the motive must be a desire to follow a set of rules or conventions because they contributed to a desirable end, and that a man did not have an artificial virtue if he performed the sorts of actions demanded by the rules or conventions from some other motive, so that the fact that they did conform to the rules was purely adventitious. It would seem not unlikely that similar conditions are necessary for a proper moral evaluation in the case of these virtues and vices. If this is the case, however, arousal of the feelings of moral approval and disapproval depends on more than just sympathizing with the feelings of pleasure and pain caused by the actions of the agent on those who have contact with him. It surely involves a recognition by the observer similar to that of the

agent, that the rules or conventions in question lead to a
desirable end, as well as the recognition, by the observer,
that this is the underlying motive of the agent's actions.
Furthermore, the sympathy involved is not so much with the
pain or pleasure felt by those directly affected by the
agent's actions, as with the feelings of pain or pleasure
experienced by society as a whole as a result of the general
adherence to certain conventions. This latter point is prob-
ably connected to the observer's required recognition that
these rules or conventions are established for the general
good of society, since the general good, in Hume's system,
surely consists in no more than that more desirable ends
are reached by following the conventions, desirable ends be-
ing those which give most pleasure, (or, at least, lead to
the fulfillment of people's desires, which Ardal argues is
not to be identified with the seeking of pleasure[10]). Hume
has this in mind when he says:

> After it is once establish'd by these conventions,
> it is _naturally_ attended with a strong sentiment of
> morals; which can proceed from nothing but our sym-
> pathy with the interests of society.   (T.579-80)

("Naturally" here of course means "spontaneously"; it does
not import a contrast to the artificiality of the virtues
in question.)

The most difficult aspect of this problem is the
possible conflict between the natural and artificial vir-
tues, from the point of view of the observer, who makes
the moral evaluation. I have discussed this point in the
previous chapter, and need add little more to my discussion
there. It appears to be largely a case of choosing between

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[10]Ibid., pp. 69-70.

the interests of one man, and of the community as a whole,
or choosing between short-range and long-range advantages.
The observer in a sense has to choose between these alter-
natives in the operation of sympathy, and it seems to me en-
tirely possible that if he is confronted with the individual
man harmed by an act of, for example, justice, he may feel
moral disapproval, whereas if he considers the case from a
more general point of view, and sympathizes with the feel-
ings of society as a whole, he may feel moral approval.
This is not an unusual moral dilemma, and once again, if
Hume's account is considered as descriptive of normal moral
life, it is not surprising that such a conflict should be
contained within it. He gives the reader no clues as to
what to do in the case of such a moral conflict, nor, for
that matter, any account of what happens when the observer
finds himself in a _situation where there are conflicting
feelings with which it is possible for him to sympathize.
However, the general impression one gets from the Treatise
is that the artificial virtues are more important, in the
sense that in the case of a conflict, the agent ought to
follow the conventions rather than his "natural" instincts,
and the observer ought to sympathize with the feelings of
society in general rather than with those of particular in-
dividuals. The artificial virtues are after all established
to bring about more desirable states of affairs, or, as Hume
puts it:

       our natural uncultivated ideas of morality, instead
       of providing a remedy for the partiality of our af-
       fections, do rather conform themselves to that par-
       tiality, and give it additional force and influence.

          The remedy, then, is not deriv'd from nature,
       but from artifice; or more properly speaking, nature

> provides a remedy in the judgment and understanding,
> for what is irregular and incommodious in the affec-
> tions.   (T.489)

Since the artificial virtues are providing a "remedy", it
would appear that in cases of conflict, either as agent or
observer, their dictates are to be followed, rather than
those of the natural virtues.

The point made by Hume about the remedy being pro-
vided in the judgment and understanding, also accounts for
the rather more complex nature of the process of sympathy
in the observer in the case of the artificial virtues. I
have argued that moral evaluation in this class of virtues
depends not only upon sympathizing with the feelings of
society, but also recognizing that any particular action
corresponding to an artificial virtue is one of a class of
actions, and that the feelings with which to sympathize are
those which result from the practice as a whole, and not
those which result from an individual action of the class.
There is thus obviously rather more "judgment and under-
standing" involved in evaluating the artificial virtues than
the natural virtues, where only the feelings resulting from
the individual action need be considered. In the latter
case moral evaluation can be seen as an almost purely me-
chanical process, whereas in the former case the process is
much more than that.

Another curious aspect of the theory, which is brought
out by the consideration of the role of sympathy in evaluat-
ing the artificial virtues, is that whereas the sympathy
on which the moral evaluation is based is with the feelings
caused as a result of certain actions, the moral approval
or disapproval is actually of the agent's motives. It will

be remembered that this is one of Hume's earliest, and most
firmly made points with regard to moral evaluation; that
what are regarded with moral approval or disapproval are
the motives, and that the actions only have moral value as
derived from the moral value of the motives causing them.
I have argued earlier that the motives derive their moral
value from being conducive of some desirable state of af-
fairs, but this does not detract from the claim that moral
value resides in motives, not actions. However, the aspect
of sympathy in moral approval or disapproval does appear,
most obviously in the case of the other regarding virtues,
to focus attention on the actions rather than the motives.
In the case of those qualities useful to the agent, I argued
that the pleasure to be sympathised with was that caused by
the results of the motives being put into action, and not
just the motives. In the case of those qualities agreeable
to those other than the agent I argued that it was clearly
the actions which resulted from the motives that caused the
pleasure, since the motive was private. The same is surely
true of those qualities useful to people other than the
agent; the motive is not of use unless it is put into action,
and it is clearly the action which causes the pleasure.
Only in the case of those qualities immediately agreeable
to the agent does it make any sense to talk of the motive
itself actually causing pleasure. What then is the connec-
tion between the sympathy with the pleasure or pain caused
by actions, and the point that moral evaluation is of mo-
tives, not actions? The connection must surely lie in the
belief of the observer that the action is a result of a
particular motive, and that such a motive, or that motives

of such a type, tend to result in actions which cause pleasure, either by their immediate agreeability or by their utility. Since the motive is essentially private, this suggests that the observer not only sympathizes with the feelings he judges the affected person to have, on the basis of his behaviour, but that he also judges on the basis of the agent's behaviour what motive must underly his action. The moral evaluation is not solely based, then, upon the feelings of pleasure aroused by sympathy, but also depends on a judgment about the nature of the motive underlying the action. This would seem to be the case even with those qualities which are immediately agreeable to the agent, since in the case of a vice enjoyed by the agent, moral approval is not appropriately elicited by sympathy with his feelings of pleasure. This is an aspect of Hume's account of moral evaluation which is not discussed by Hume himself in any detail; it is also an aspect, the general effect of which is to increase the role of reason in moral evaluation.

It also allows for mistaken moral evaluations, in the sense that the observer might well make a mistake about the motive underlying an action, so that he morally approves of the agent in a situation where he ought not, and where he presumably would not were he correct in his assessment of the agent's actual motive. This does not, I think, conflict with Hume's general edict, that:

> Moral distinctions, therefore, are not the offspring
> of reason. Reason is wholly inactive, and can never
> be the source of so active a principle as conscience,
> or a sense of morals.   (T.458)

The approval or disapproval is still aroused by the feeling of pleasure or pain acquired by sympathy, since the feeling of pleasure or pain is the necessary condition of feeling

moral approval or disapproval; but reason informs the observer of the likely motive behind the action and thus, in some cases, can indicate that although pleasure has been caused in this case, the usual effect of such a motive is pain. Since motives are valued insofar as they lead to desirable states of affairs, and since there is some consistency between motives and actions, it would seem that there is a general rule to be appealed to here as in other parts of the theory. In general, actions causing pleasure will result from motives which are morally approved of, and those causing pain will result from motives which are morally disapproved of. The general assumption, then, on recognizing the existence of pleasure or pain in the agent or those affected by him, is that the pleasure or pain has been caused as a result of a morally valuable or reprehensible motive. The observer will thus not be forced to consider the actual nature of the agent's motive in each case, since he can appeal to the general rule. Thus error is possible, in that a morally reprehensible motive may result in pleasure for the agent or those affected by him, and the observer, unaware of the actual motive, may follow the general rule and feel moral approval, although it is unmerited. Likewise, an observer aware of the motive prompting an action, may feel moral disapproval in situations where the expected pain does not ensue. The principles in operation here will be the same as those in any other case where the expected and usual pleasure or pain does not occur. The general possibility of error here is not inconsistent with normal moral experience; the sort of error I have described the observer as making is surely the sort of error we have all frequently

made.

What this operation does suggest, however, is that
even in the case of the natural virtues, moral evaluations
are made more on the basis of general considerations about
the nature of a motive and its results, than on the basis
of particular actions. That is, it is suggested that just
as in the artificial virtues, moral approval is aroused on
the basis of the belief that the action which caused the
pleasure is the sort of action likely to follow from a par-
ticular motive, which is the sort of motive which is typical
of a particular virtue, is morally valuable, or is likely
to result in actions such as this one, and thus lead to a
desirable state of affairs. This point I think ties in
both with the notion of a general point of view, the sub-
ject of the following chapter, and the account of the vir-
tues given earlier, as tendencies to have certain sorts of
motives. Motives are regarded with moral approval only if
they can be said to embody a certain kind of general de-
sire or purpose. I have discussed this point in some de-
tail earlier (Chapter 3). This being the case, moral ap-
proval of a motive identified as a particular agent's on a
particular occasion would be based on the belief that it
was a member of a certain class of valuable motives. This
is the sort of general consideration I think the account
of moral evaluation calls for. Thus in this respect moral
evaluation of natural and artificial virtues does not differ.
The difference still remains, however, in the consideration
of individual or general results of actions or motives, and
of short-term and long-term advantages.

There is another question about moral evaluation

which might be brought up at this point, in relation to the operation of sympathy. This is whether there is any explanation, under Hume's theory, for the failure to make the appropriate moral judgment. By this I mean something more than I meant in the case I mentioned above, where the observer is mistaken about the nature of the agent's motive, and so makes a mistaken judgment, in that if he had known the truth, he would have made another evaluation. The sorts of cases I am thinking about are those where there is a genuine disagreement about the moral worth of a certain kind of motive, as for example it might be said there is today in reference to the virtue of chastity, or where one individual with a particular vice does not disapprove of another with the same vice, as one indolent man might not disapprove of another.

This is a problem which is, in reference to a discussion of Hume, somewhat anachronistic. The variation of moral opinions is more a matter of concern for the Twentieth century than for the Eighteenth. Hume, as a matter of fact, did not appear to think that there was that much variety in moral opinions.

> This proposition must hold strictly true, with regard to every quality, that is determin'd merely by sentiment. In what sense we can talk either of a right or a wrong taste in morals, eloquence, or beauty, shall be consider'd afterwards.[11] In the mean time, it may be observ'd, that there is such an uniformity in the general sentiments of mankind, as to render such questions of but small importance.
> (T.547n.)

> The general opinion of mankind has some authority in all cases; but in this or morals 'tis perfectly infallible.
> (T.552)

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[11] a promise which, so far as I can see, is not carried out.

The only exception he appears to allow to this general
ability of all men to recognize the morally good, and in
the same way, is with reference to pride, or conceit, where
he comments:

> Nothing is more disagreeable than a man's over-
> weaning conceit of himself: Everyone almost has
> a strong propensity to this vice: No one can
> well distinguish in himself betwixt the vice and
> the virtue, or be certain, that his esteem of his
> own merit is well-founded.   (T.597-598)

However, except for this one exception, there is no account
given of the causes, or explanations, of mistaken or differ-
ing moral evaluations. The question then arises, (if there
is not such universal agreement, as it would appear to the
modern man that there is not,) whether an account of these
differences consistent with Hume's scheme can be given.

It is, I think, first of all clear that an answer
cannot be given in purely rational terms, since although con-
siderations of reason do enter into moral evaluations, the
basis of moral approval or disapproval is still the feelings
of pleasure or pain aroused in the observer by viewing the
results of actions, and this basis is non-rational. The
simplest answer would obviously be to say that in some
cases sympathy fails to operate, and thus no moral evalua-
tion is made, or alternatively, that sympathy does operate,
on the basis of the wrong feelings. However, there does
not seem to be any ready explanation for why this might
occur. It also seems to me that moral disagreements are
rather more substantial than can be accounted for purely
on the grounds of a failure of such a mental operation.
On the other hand, it cannot be just a matter of a disagree-
ment about whether or not a quality or character leads to
a desirable state of affairs, because in the end this

appears to be a matter of whether it causes pleasure or happiness for the agent and those who have contact with him, and this is itself a matter of sympathizing with the feelings of the agent or those who have contact with him. In the case of one indolent man failing to disapprove of another, the appropriate feelings are presumably available with which he can sympathize. Perhaps there is no one answer, in the sense that there are a large number of different cases. In some cases, most probably the artificial virtues, it may be a case of rational disagreement with the belief that adopting a certain convention will lead to a more desirable state of affairs, and Hume's own recognition of a wide variety of practice between societies with regard to the artificial virtues (T.528, 563) may well cover some of what would naturally be called "moral disagreement", while at the same time this variety would be subsumed by him under the "uniformity of the general sentiments of mankind". The problem here is that, while a general view of the functions of some alien institution may suffice to make it humanly comprehensible, it may not suffice to make it acceptable.

In other cases it may be a willful refusal to sympathize with certain feelings, surely a possibility under the Humean scheme, since he never argues that the operation of sympathy is totally involuntary. This might fit the case of one indolent man failing to disapprove of another. In other cases, it might just be a failure to recognize the feelings with which it would be appropriate to sympathize. Since it is the case that moral disagreements are of different sorts, it is perhaps not surprising that one is not able to give a single account of them. All of the

suggestions I have made I believe to be consistent with Hume's theory, and could easily account for at least some examples of disagreements. In the end, however, though much can be accommodated within Hume's machinery, it may be that the psychological foundations of his system are at once too strictly laid down and too uniformly benevolent in spirit to accommodate everything we should recognize as a comprehensible morality. That the management of aggression is an important demand on any moral economy, for example, is an idea more familiar to our theories and our life than it was to Hume's.

To summarize: I have argued that sympathy is a necessary constituent of the arousal of moral approval in the case of all the virtues except those which are immediately agreeable to persons other than the agent, at which point I have agreed with Hendenius that there is no good reason why feelings of moral approval could not be aroused in these cases without this operation. An examination of the operation of sympathy has lead me to the conclusion that moral evaluation of all the virtues and vices, and not just the artificial virtues and vices, depends not only on sympathy but also on a belief about the nature of the agent's motive. This belief is, basically, that the motive of the agent was typical of a class of motives whose practice leads to a more desirable state of affairs. In the case of the natural virtues, which fall under all four of the criteria Hume gives for moral value, the feelings sympathized with are those immediately experienced by the agent, or those who have any contact with him, this sympathy being to some degree directed by general rules or beliefs about the nature

of the agent's motive. In the case of the artificial vir-
tues and vices, which all fall under the criterion of be-
ing useful or detrimental to those who have contact with
the agent, the feelings with which the observer sympathizes
are not the immediate feelings experienced by those who
have any contact with the agent, but are rather the feel-
ings of society as a whole, as caused by the general ad-
herence of the whole of society to a certain set of rules
or conventions. Thus moral evaluation of the artificial
virtues and vices depends to a large degree on a belief
about the results of generally following a set of rules or
conventions. I have argued that it is obvious that con-
flicting moral evaluations can arise, based on the diff-
ference between the artificial and the natural virtues, and
that in the case of such conflicts, it is clear that Hume
intended that one ought to approve of the artificial vir-
tue, despite the fact that it appeared to be a natural vice,
and disapprove of the artificial vice, even though it might
appear to be a natural virtue. The observer, as well as
the agent, thus follows the artificial when it comes into
conflict with the natural. These considerations lead me
to the conclusion that although Hume's basic point about
moral approval and disapproval depending on sentiment and
not reason still stands, reason has a rather larger role
to play in moral approval and disapproval than might at
first appear. I base this on the assumption that choosing
between specific and general interests, and between short
and long-term advantages, which is what is involved in
placing the artificial virtues before the natural ones,
is a matter of reason and not solely a matter of sentiment.

This conclusion also follows from the earlier point, that moral approval and disapproval rests on a belief about the nature of the agent's motive, which belief is based on rather more than sentiment. Reason can inform us of the tendency of actions or motives, Hume claims, and this is what the belief about the agent's motive is based upon. These general considerations, which along with sympathy, are the basis of moral evaluation, lead us to the notion of taking a general point of view, which I shall deal with in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

The General Point of View

Besides the operation of sympathy in moral evaluation, there is another operation which plays a large, and it appears, necessary role, in the arousal of moral feelings. This operation is the taking of a general point of view. The first mention of this operation occurs when Hume says that:

> as everything, which gives uneasiness in human action, upon the general survey is call'd Vice, and whatever produces satisfaction, in the same manner, is denominated Virtue;...
>
> (T.499, italics mine)

To take a general point of view appears to be, on Hume's account, to take the point of view of the agent or those who have any connexion with him.

> Now, in judging of characters, the only interest or pleasure, which appears the same to every spectator, is that of the person himself, whose character is examin'd; or that of persons, who have a connexion with him. And tho' such interests and pleasures touch us more faintly than our own, yet being more constant and universal, they counterballance the latter even in practice, and alone are admitted in speculation as the standard of virtue and morality
>
> (T.591, italics mine)

The relation of this operation to that of sympathy is thus clear, since the operation of sympathy enables the observer to consider, or rather share, the feelings of the agent, or those who have a connexion with him. To take the general point of view thus seems to be little more than to sympathize with the agent or those affected by the agent, which operation has already been granted to be a necessary aspect of moral evaluation in most, if not all, of the virtues and vices. However, the problem with this interpretation of Hume's account of taking a general point of view, is that it

is rather more a particular point of view. In the case of
the self-regarding virtuesor vices, for example, we have
seen that the role of the operation of sympathy is to trans-
fer the feelings of the agent to the observer. This is to
take the point of view of the agent, which is of course dif-
ferent from that of the observer, but is hardly a "general"
point of view. The same might well be said, although less
strongly, about the operation of sympathy with reference to
the other-regarding virtues and vices. However, other things
that Hume says about the general point of view suggest that
he does have something rather more "general" in mind. For
example, he argues that:

> Besides, every particular man has a peculiar posi-
> tion with regard to others; and 'tis impossible we
> cou'd ever converse on any reasonable terms, were
> each of us to consider characters and persons, only
> as they appear from his peculiar point of view.
> In order, therefore, to prevent those continual con-
> tradictions, and arrive at a more stable judgment of
> things, we fix on some steady and general points of
> view; and always, in our thoughts, place ourselves in
> them, whatever may be our present situation. (T.581-82)

These "steady and general points of view" Hume compares to
the taking of a certain position in perceiving objects.

> Such corrections are common with regard to all the
> senses; and indeed 'twere impossible we cou'd ever
> make use of language, or communicate our sentiments
> to one another, did we not correct the momentary
> appearances of things, and overlook our present si-
> tuations.   (T.582)

He further argues, in reference to sense perception, that:

> 'Tis thus the understanding corrects the appearances
> of the senses, and makes us imagine, that an object
> at twenty foot distance seems even to the eye as
> large as one of the same dimensions at ten.   (T.632)

The general point of view thus would seem to be some partic-
ular, and "correct" point of view for regarding the situa-
tion, and not just the point of view of the agent or those
who have any connexion with him, since these would surely

be examples of peculiar points of view, which Hume says are
to be disregarded or discounted in judgment. Finally, we
find, to support this interpretation, that Hume says:

> The intercourse of sentiments, therefore, in so-
> ciety and conversation, makes us form some general
> inalterable standard, by which we may approve or
> disapprove of characters and manners.   (T.603
>   italics mine)

The formation of this general inalterable standard, which
surely must be meant to be more than just the point of view
of particular people in particular situations, is designed
to counteract the vagaries of sympathy (T.603), and thus we
are led to the conclusion that the general point of view is
more than just the feelings acquired by sympathy from the
agent or those others involved in the situation although it
may presuppose the operation of sympathy. If it is an in-
alterable standard, is not just the point of view of a par-
ticular man, since any man's point of view is alterable.
Nor can it be the standard of any particular group of men,
since each man is affected differently by different situa-
tions, and thus what is reached is several standards, and
not one inalterable one.

It is at this point in Hume's theory that he is cited
as an ancestor of what has been called the "Ideal Observer
Theory" in ethics. Since this theory presents a possible
interpretation of the taking of a general point of view, al-
though one that I think is mistaken, I think it deserves
some discussion at this point. One of the best known pro-
ponents of this theory is the American philosopher R.B. Brandt.
The theory is basically an account of the meaning of moral
terms. An example of a typical definition under this theory
is given by Brandt as:

"x is better than y" means "If anyone were, in res-
pect of x and y, fully informed and vividly imagina-
tive, impartial, in a calm frame of mind and other-
wise normal, he would prefer x to y."....In other
words, the theory supposes that ethical statements
assert about their subject-term that any person who
fulfilled certain qualifications at the time would ex-
perience a certain reaction toward the subject-term.[1]

The claim sometimes made in reference to Hume is that what
he meant by taking a general point of view was to take the
position of the "ideal observer", as outlined in this theory.
The general point of view would thus be the point of view
which would be taken by a normal disinterested observer who
was acquainted with all the relevant facts, presumably not
only those "facts" acquired by sympathy, but also the facts
about the true nature of the agent's motive and so forth,
and the correct moral evaluation would be that which would
be aroused in this observer as a result of his observations.
The general point of view thus becomes something like the
omniscient point of view. The thing to be noted, of course,
is that this omniscient observer has still to have all the
emotions and feelings of the normal observer, since it is
the emotions or feelings, and not reason, which are the source
of moral evaluation. This is also implied in the quotation
from Brandt given above. Thus although he is disinterested,
he is only so in the sense that he is not one of the people
involved in the situation, but not in the sense that a non-
human might be said to be disinterested with regard to the
situation. He must not, for instance, be uninterested in it.
It must still arouse in him normal human emotions.

    This is certainly a possible interpretation of what

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[1] Brandt, R, Ethical Theory, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-
Hall Inc., 1959, p. 173.

Hume means by taking a general point of view, but my own opinion is that it goes rather beyond what Hume actually had in mind. The problem is with the "ideal" aspect of the Ideal Observer. It is, I think, certainly the case that part of taking a general point of view is to take the point of view of an observer rather than a participant in the action, or rather, to remove oneself from one's own particular point of view. However, there is nowhere in Hume this suggestion of omniscience that the "ideal observer" would appear to have in the modern theory. To take the general point of view is to take the point of view of the agent or those who have any connexion with him, and this does not appear to be the position of the omniscient observer. The omniscient observer, among other things, knows the long-range results of a course of action, this is not suggested in the Humean account. Nor is there any reason to believe that the attitude of the ideal observer in any particular case would correspond to the attitudes of the agent or those affected by him. And finally, there is the radical difference, that Hume is giving an account of the mechanics of arousing moral sentiments, and the modern theorists an account of the meaning of moral terms, so that in the end the two theories do not really coincide. It may be the case that the mechanics of arousing moral feelings in Hume's theory involves taking the point of view of an observer, rather than of a participant in the action, although even this is slightly misleading, but this in no way suggests that this is what Hume thought the meaning of moral terms to be. And likewise, even if one holds that the meaning of a moral term depends on, or expresses, the attitude of an ideal observer, this does not entail that the

arousal of moral feelings involves taking such a point of
view. There are two disparate theories here, and the claim
that Hume is an obvious ancestor of the modern Ideal Observ-
er Theory seems to me far-fetched.

I have said that the claim that taking a general
point of view is to take the role of the observer is slightly
misleading. The reason it is so is that Hume says that the
observer is to take the point of view of the agent or those
who have any connection with him, (T.591) rather than his
own, which means he is to abstract <u>himself</u> from the situa-
tion, and discount his own feelings of pleasure and pain,
but at the same time he is to consider, or actually experience,
by way of sympathy, the feelings of those people other than
himself who are involved in the situation. Thus, in a sense,
the observer becomes less of an observer, and more of a par-
ticipant, when he takes the general point of view, and only
acts as an observer in the sense that he discounts his own
feelings in the process.

The reference to the process of taking a general
point of view as being the sort of thing which happens with
regard to all the senses (T.582) might give some sort of
clue as to what Hume had in mind at this point. The correct
point of view is like the correct point of perception: the
point at which the object is most clear or most readily seen,
a point neither too close, so that the object is obscured
by the details, nor too far, so that the details cannot be
seen at all. This places the observer, in moral questions,
at the middle-distance, neither so close that the matter is
obscured by his own sentiments, nor so distant that he is
not at all involved. He must be involved to some degree,

since moral evaluation is a matter of sentiment, not reason, and so there must be at least enough involvement to arouse the appropriate sentiments. This middle distance, Hume appears to argue, is the point of view of those others involved in the situation. The problem with this, is that it does not seem so much the middle distance, as a close view, but the close view of persons other than the person doing the evaluating. However, I suspect that the point which is being made here is that although the observer may acquire by sympathy the feelings of those others, he will not feel so strongly as they do about the matter. That is, his feelings, as acquired by sympathy, will be somewhat subdued versions of the originals, and thus he will not be "carried away" so to speak, by the strength of his feelings and will make a more balanced evaluation. This account -- merely in terms of taking up the position of the other -- perhaps may seem too rationalist to be consistent with Hume's general tendencies, but I do not think that it actually is. In the first place, as I have argued earlier, reason does have some role to play in moral evaluation, in the sense of supplying facts on which the emotions are to some extent dependent. Secondly, it is clear that it is possible for the observer to receive conflicting feelings by means of sympathy in any one situation, a point which I shall discuss later in more detail, and there must be some means by which he "balances" these out, relying no doubt partly on some general rules, which will indicate the normal pattern of events. Finally, it is consistent with normal human behaviour that the discounting of one's own interests, at least to the degree that one's own interests are no more relevant than any other single person's, will

inevitably lead to a less biased decision about the moral
value of a certain course of character or action, and this
is surely the end that Hume has in mind here.

The point about discounting one's own feelings must
be modified to some degree, however, since moral evaluation
is also possible in situations in which the observer plays
no part whatsoever. Thus Hume gives examples of moral eval-
uations about events distant in time and place.

> we give the same approbation to the same moral qual-
> ities in China as in England....nor can I feel the
> same lively pleasure from the virtues of a person,
> who liv'd in Greece two thousand years ago, that I
> feel from the virtues of a familiar friend and acquain-
> tance. Yet I do not say, that I esteem the one more
> than the other.   (T.581)

In these sorts of evaluations, it is quite clear that the ob-
server is not discounting his own feelings, in the sense of
abstracting himself from the situation, since he is not
really in it, and the act of moral evaluation involves put-
ting himself into it, to some degree. Yet surely this is
just the other side of the coin. In those situations in
which the observer is involved, he must remove himself to
some degree, and thus discount his feelings of interest when
he morally evaluates, whereas in those situations in which
he plays no part whatsoever, he must "enter" into it to some
degree, and, so to speak, discount his uninterested feelings.

> Our servant, if diligent and faithful, may excite
> stronger sentiments of love and kindness than Marcus
> Brutus, as represented in history; but we say not
> upon that account, that the former character is more
> laudable than the latter. We know, that were we to
> approach equally near to that renown'd patriot, he
> would command a much higher degree of affection and
> admiration.   (T.582)

Thus, in both examples, the observer removes himself from
his own situation, and discounts his own feelings, whether
of great interest or total lack of interest, and takes up

a more central position.

The conclusion to which one is thus led is that what Hume means by a general point of view is a point of view which embraces the feelings of all those involved in the relevant situation, rather than the point of view of some "outside observer", and that "general" is to be taken in the sense of "wide-ranging" rather than in the sense of "uninvolved". This rather makes the analogy with the correct point of view in visual perception less compelling, however, since that point of view is somewhere between wide and narrow. I would think, however, that the analogy could be maintained by suggesting that Hume does not mean the general point of view to include the attitudes of everyone who might possibly be affected by the course of action or character, as the Ideal Observer Theory would appear to hold, but only the attitudes of those people whom the average observer could see as being more or less immediately involved. The general point of view could thus be considered halfway between the all-encompassing view of an ideal observer and the narrow view of the man who considers only his own interests. It may seem paradoxical to sustain the sense-perception analogy by reference to a point of view midway between that of an ideal observer and that of someone else. For what point of view could possibly be more ideal than that of an ideal observer? But that paradox is only apparent. For the "ideal observer" is, as has been said, an omniscient observer, and is therefore not analogous to a perceiver by the senses at all; he does not, in fact, observe anything from a <u>point of view</u> at all. The analogy of sense-perception, therefore, does not involve (as the paradox suggested) staying with the ideal observer, but

precisely involves moving away from him.

However, although we have narrowed the field some-
what in our search for the notion of the general point of
view, in that it is not the views of either the all-knowing
ideal observer, or the narrow-minded man who considers only
his own interests, we still have not got an account of what
point of view it actually is. We have still the problem
that the description given by Hume:

> that of the person himself, whose character is
> examin'd; or that of persons, who have a con-
> nexion with him. (T.591)

does not really sound like a "general" point of view nor,
for that matter, like

> some general inalterable standard. (T.603)

It sounds rather more like a collection of particular points
of view. Part of the answer to this problem may lie in the
consistency of human reactions to particular situations. In
a footnote, Hume comments, as we noticed in the last chapter,

> In what sense we can talk either of a <u>right</u> or
> a <u>wrong</u> taste in morals, eloquence, or beauty,
> shall be consider'd afterwards. In the mean-
> time, it may be observ'd, that there is such a
> uniformity in the <u>general</u> sentiments of mankind,
> as to render such questions of but small import-
> ance. (T.547 n.)

Many times in his discussion of morality and moral evaluation,
Hume refers to general rules, which people tend to follow,
and which can be relied upon as guides, even when the unex-
pected occurs. Thus, even when a man does not feel pain
where most men do, the observer sympathizes with the non-
existent pain, relying on the general rule. These general
rules thus express the normal course of action, and are to
be relied upon, since they are based on the clearly true
premise, that human behaviour is sufficiently consistent

that one knows what to expect. Thus, although there is always the possibility of conflict in the feelings of the agent and of those affected by him, in general, most people react in more or less the same way in similar situations. The observer thus has a rough guide to the normal feelings resulting from particular situations. For example, the virtue of benevolence results usually in feelings of pleasure for all concerned, and thus the general point of view in this case might consist of feelings of pleasure in viewing a situation in which this virtue has been put into practice. Although there may be occasional variations from this: (my heir, for example, may not regard all my acts of generosity with complete pleasure,) the usual or normal result is fairly clear. If the observer's own feelings conflict with the feelings required by the taking of a general point of view, then they are to be discounted, as not being part of the normal scheme of things; if they do not, then they only add to the general picture. Following this approach, then, we take the "general point of view" to mean the "normal" or "usual" point of view.

There are some problems with this interpretation, however. It appears to be inconsistent with Hume's account of the reason why such a general point of view is necessary in moral evaluation.

> Our situation, with regard both to persons and
> to things, is in continual fluctuation; and a
> man, that lies at distance from us may, in a
> little time, become a familiar acquaintance.
> Besides, every partciular man has a peculiar
> position with regard to others; and 'tis impos-
> sible we cou'd ever converse together on any
> reasonable terms, were each of us to consider
> characters and persons, only as they appear
> from his peculiar point of view. In order,
> therefore, to prevent those continual contra-
> dictions, and arrive at a more stable judgment
> of things, we fix on some steady and general

points of view; and always, in our thoughts, place
ourselves in them, whatever may be our present sit-
uation.....In general, all sentiments of praise or
blame are variable, according to our situation of
nearness or remoteness, with regard to the person
praised or blamed, and according to the present dis-
position of our mind. But these variations we regard
not in our general decisions...   (T.581-582)

Hume appears to be arguing that the reason why the taking of

a general point of view is necessary is that there are no

normal or usual sentiments that can be relied upon. There

are, a wide variety of differing sentiments, and the taking

of a general point of view is required in order to establish

a common sentiment, and thus cannot be based on such a common

sentiment.

However, although this analysis of what Hume meant

by the "general point of view" clearly is not satisfactory,

there is some degree of truth in it. A characteristic or

quality of mind is deemed a virtue if it is useful or agree-

able to the agent or to those who have contact with him, and

this utility or agreeableness results in pleasure for the

agent, for those who have contact with him, and for the ob-

server by means of the operation of sympathy. It is on

these feelings of pleasure that the moral evaluation is

based. Hence, a character which is judged to be morally val-

uable on the whole must produce more pleasure than pain,

since it is this pleasure which "causes" the appropriate

moral evaluation. The sentiment of the observer must there-

fore be similar to the most common sentiment produced in

people by the character, in order to account for his moral

evaluation. The variety will presumably be largely in the

degree of pleasure or pain felt by the various people in-

volved in the situation, along with an occasional dissent-

ing sentiment in people who are unusually affected by the

character in question.

It may be that the correct approach is to consider not the content of the sentiment, in the attempt to describe the general point of view, but rather the manner in which the sentiment is entertained. In other words, the general point of view might be regarded, not as a particular sentiment chosen from among many possible in a given situation, but rather as a sentiment which results from considering the situation in a "general" fashion. The sort of thing I have in mind here is that the observer would not only abstract <u>himself</u> from the particular situation, but would take a disinterested point of view of the <u>particular</u> situation itself. The judgment would then be made not so much on the basis of considering the pleasure or pain produced by the particular situation, but rather the pleasure or pain generally produced by situations or characters of this sort. The particular case would be evaluated with reference to some sort of general criteria.

That this particular analysis might be applicable to Hume's notion of the general point of view is, I think, supported by Hume's account of our reasons for approving of characters of mind which are normally useful or agreeable, but which in particular cases might be prevented from operating.

> Where a character is, in every respect, fitted to be beneficial to society, the imagination passes easily from the cause to the effect, without considering that there are still some circumstances wanting to render the cause a compleat one. <u>General rules</u> create a species of probability, which sometimes influences the judgment, and always the imagination.
> 'Tis true, when the cause is compleat, and a good disposition is attended with good fortune, which renders it really beneficial to society, it gives a

> stronger pleasure to the spectator, and is attended
> with a more lively sympathy. We are more affected
> by it; and yet we do not say that it is more virtuous,
> or that we esteem it more.   (T.585)

That is, we do not consider just the particular case, but the

particular case as a member of a class, and our judgment is

based on the class, or normal result, rather than just on the

particular case. This analysis also easily accounts for the

possibility of moral evaluations of characters in history, or

in distant countries. We do not have to consider the partic-

ular effects of the character on those surrounding the agent,

(which it may be impossible for the observer to know,) we

only have to consider the usual results of the operation of

such a character, in any time or place.

> The imagination adheres to the general view of
> things, and distinguishes the feelings they pro-
> duce, from those which arise from our particular
> and momentary situation.   (T.587)

In most particular cases it will of course be true, that the

sentiment the observer has will be indicative of, or similar

to, the feelings of most people involved in the situation.

This follows from the claim that general rules can be estab-

lished on the basis of a generalization from particular

cases. However, this is not a necessary correspondence, and

will allow for the moral approval of a character even when

the results of the operation of that character of mind have

"misfired", resulting in pain in the particular case, rather

than the expected pleasure.

The only real problem that such an analysis presents

is that it appears to be inconsistent with Hume's initial

"definition" of the general point of view, as being the point

of view

> of the person himself, whose character is examin'd,
> or that of persons, who have a connexion with him.

And 'tho such interests and pleasures touch us more
faintly than our own, yet being more constant and
universal, they counter-ballance the latter even in
practice, and are alone admitted in speculation as
the standard of virtue and morality. They alone
produce that particular feeling or sentiment, on
which moral distinctions depend.   (T.591)

This passage does appear to refer to the particular case, and

to suggest that the points of view to be taken into account

are those felt by the agent and those affected by him in the

particular situation. It is not suggested that they should

be regarded as indicative of some sort of normal reaction.

Yet I think it could be argued that the claim that these

sentiments are "more constant and universal" is an implicit

reference to the general or usual results of the operation of

such a character, than to the results in any particular case.

If not, the claim that they are "more constant and universal"

does not appear to be justifiable. Thus I do not think my

analysis conflicts with Hume's own account of the general

point of view, and although it might present some problems of

interpretation, it does, on the other hand, make more reason-

able some other points which Hume makes about moral evalua-

tion.

In the end, then, I think the general point of view

which the observer takes in moral evaluation not only requires

him to discount his only feelings in a particular situation

(a position I do not think my analysis rules out) but also

requires him to consider not the particular situation itself,

but rather the particular situation as representative of a

class of similar situations. The sentiments of pleasure and

pain to be considered are not just those felt by the people

involved in the situation, but also the sentiments which

would be expected, under the general rule, to result from the

operation of the character of mind being examined. The importance of taking a general point of view is, of course, that Hume claims that only the sentiments of approval or disapproval resulting from the taking of this point of view are properly moral approval or disapproval.

> They alone produce that particular feeling or sentiment, on which moral distinctions depend.   (T.591)

> 'Tis only when a character is consider'd in general, without reference to our particular interest, that it causes such a feeling or sentiment, as denominates it morally good or evil.   (T.472)

An interesting aspect of this notion is the implied conservatism in morality which can be seen in it. That which is properly regarded with moral approval, in Hume's system, is basically that which is normally so regarded, by the majority of people. The moral reformer ought therefore to be disapproved of, basically because he is a reformer, and thus is necessarily not advocating the usual. As a matter of fact, from a theoretical point of view, the moral views of the reformer become themselves highly suspect. Either he is not taking a general point of view, in which case his views may be interesting, but non-moral, or else he has made a terrible mistake in the process of acquiring these views (I shall discuss the problem of moral error at a later stage in this chapter) and they are moral, but mistaken. It will do no good to appeal to some sort of utilitarian principle, that actually following a certain plan of action, or encouraging the development of certain characters will in the long run lead to the happiness of most people, since although Hume argues that men do, as a matter of fact, approve of what is useful or agreeable, they do not do so on the rational basis that they ought to do so because it is useful or agreeable.

What the moral reformer must do is actually to make people
feel pleasure as the result of the development of a certain
character, in which case they will come to approve of it,
and the moral reformer will finally come to have correct
moral sentiments. He would be in more or less the same posi-
tion as those mythical people who instituted the rules or
conventions underlying the artificial virtues. ' He cannot
establish them on moral grounds, but must rather appeal to
self-interest or some other non-moral sentiment in order to
establish his point. This is a somewhat unhappy result of
the theory, but it is consistent with the general tone of
Hume's work.

To take the general point of view, as I have argued
earlier in this chapter, has an obvious connection with the
operation of sympathy, in that to take the general point of
view involves taking the point of view of persons other than
the observer, and this would seem to presuppose the opera-
tion of sympathy. However, given the account of what the
general point of view involves, as I have outlined it above,
the operation of sympathy is somewhat less than straight-
forward. It will be recalled that the operation involves
the "transfer" of feelings to the observer from those whom
he is observing. Thus, observing a man clearly feeling
pleasure, the observer, by means of the arousal of the feel-
ing of pleasure from the idea of pleasure, himself feels
pleasure. The development in the observer of the correspond-
ing feelings is called the operation of the principle of
sympathy. Sympathy also works by what Hume refers to as the
general rule. That is, in cases where the agent does not
have the expected feeling of pleasure or pain, the observer

may none the less develop such feelings, merely on the grounds
that they normally are there, or should be there, or were ex-
pected to be there. Thus, although the operation of sympathy
appears to be an example of a causal connection, it does not
quite fit Hume's own account of causal relations.

According to Hume, we say that one thing is the cause
of a second if there is a universal correspondence between
the two events, such that the first is always followed by the
second, other things being equal, and likewise, the second is
preceded by the first, other things again being equal. The
operation of sympathy appears not to fit into this account of
causation because of the possibility of the arousal of feel-
ings of pleasure or pain in the observer when they are not
present in the agent. This difficulty can probably be got
round by saying that the feelings of pleasure or pain are ac-
tually aroused, or caused by, the corresponding idea, and
that this idea can be aroused either by seeing the correspond-
ing feeling affecting another person, or by merely just seeing
another person in a situation in which custom leads the ob-
server to have the appropriate idea. This allows one to say
that the operation of sympathy is causal, but the direct
cause of the feelings in the observer is his own ideas, and
not the feelings the agent is believed to have. This is im-
portant, since it makes possible the operation of sympathy
in those cases where there actually is no agent or other
person present with whose feelings the observer is to sympa-
thize: for example characters in ancient Rome or in China.
If taking a general point of view does presuppose the opera-
tion of sympathy, then such a process must be possible.
Moreover, if the taking of a general point of view does involve

considering the particular case only as representative of a
class of cases, as I have suggested above, then the observer
has the monumental task of sympathizing with the feelings
that generally result from the sort of character being eval-
uated, even if there are no examples of such feelings avail-
able in the particular case. This task may be subsumable
under an extended view of what the operation of sympathy in-
volves, but it is a long way from the simple arousal of the
corresponding feelings when the observer considers the feel-
ings of another person. Rather than being what one might
refer to as a "transfer" of feelings from one person to an-
other, it is a case of arriving, by means of some sort of
general rule, at an idea about what feelings might be expected
to be aroused in general by this sort of character, this
idea then forming the basis of the arousal of that feeling
in the observer. On a theoretical level I am rather dubious
about classing this sort of operation as an example of the
operation of the principle of sympathy, because of the way
this operation seems to have been extended. However, it is
clear to me that Hume meant it to be regarded as such al-
though the evidence from the text may seem conflicting on
this point.

To support the argument that sympathy is a necessary
condition of taking a general point of view, we may cite the
following passage.

> Now we have no such extensive concern for society
> but from sympathy; and consequently 'tis that prin-
> ciple, which takes us so far out of ourselves, as
> to give us the same pleasure or uneasiness in the
> characters of others, as if they had a tendency to
> our own advantage or loss.   (T.579)

On the other hand, Hume frequently makes the point that the
sympathy varies with distance in time and place, whereas the

moral evaluation does not.

> When any quality, or character, has a tendency to
> the good of mankind, we are pleas'd with it, and
> approve of it; because it presents the lively idea
> of pleasure; which idea affects us by sympathy, and
> is itself a kind of pleasure. But as this sympathy
> is very variable, it may be thought, that our senti-
> ments of morals must admit of all the same variations.
> ...But notwithstanding this variation of our sympathy,
> we give the same approbation to the same moral quali-
> ties in <u>China</u> as in <u>England</u>....The sympathy varies
> without a variation in our esteem.   (T.580-581)

This might be taken to suggest that we ignore the feelings

acquired by sympathy, since they vary, and in taking the

general point of view we do not need the operation of sympathy;

rather, it has to be discounted. However, I do not think this

is a plausible conclusion. There is at least one more sec-

tion where Hume brings the two principles together. He says:

> Nay when the injustice is so distant from us, as
> no way to affect our interest, it still displeases
> us; because we consider it as prejudicial to human
> society, and pernicious to everyone that approaches
> the person guilty of it. We partake of their un-
> easiness by <u>sympathy</u>; and as every thing, which
> gives uneasiness in human actions, upon the general
> survey, is call'd Vice, and whatever produces satis-
> faction, in the same manner, is denominated Virtue...
>   (T.499)

Thus I think Hume means the taking of a general point of view

to involve the operation of sympathy, since he regards this

latter operation as being the only.means by which the observer

can acquire any feelings except the ones with which he is im-

mediately and peculiarly affected by the actions of the agent.

If the observer is to discount or ignore his own sentiments,

and yet has to have some sentiments on which to base the

moral evaluation, then it is clear, to Hume, that these

other feelings must be acquired by the operation of sympathy.

And if moral approval or disapproval necessarily presupposes

the taking of a general point of view, then it follows that

moral approval or disapproval necessarily involves the

operation of the principle of sympathy.

Another question which arises, once it is established
that the taking of a general point of view involves the oper-
ation of the principle of sympathy, is, with how wide a range
must the observer sympathize in order to have truly taken a
general point of view? Hume says that we sympathize with
the interests of society, but how large is society? It is
clearly intended to be more than one's immediate family and
friends, towards whom one naturally feels benevolence, and
whose advantage, along with one's own, would be the object of
one's actions, were one not compelled, by virtue of the
ability to sympathize with a wider group, to take into ac-
count the interests of the rest of society. However, it is
not clear whether this wider society is meant to include man-
kind as a whole, or only the other members of one's social
group, or one's nation. Hume does believe it is possible to
sympathize with mankind as a whole:

> 'Tis true, there is no human, and indeed no sensible,
> creature, whose happiness or misery does not, in some
> measure, affect us, when brought near to us, and rep-
> resented in lively colours: But this proceeds merely
> from sympathy, and is no proof of such a universal
> affection to mankind, since this concern extends it-
> self beyond our own species.   (T.431)

However, we surely are not to conclude from this that the
taking of a general point of view involves in each case sym-
pathizing with all sensible creatures.

Perhaps one could argue that since, in all his dis-
cussions of society, the social virtues, and the artificial
virtues which are established for the interest of all society,
Hume appears to be considering, more or less, a nation as
constituting a society, that he intends the general point
of view to extend to a nation or a society, and not

necessarily beyond it. On the other hand, he does regard it as possible to make moral evaluations of characters in different times and places, and in these circumstances it would be very strange to limit one's sympathy only to the reactions of the members of one's own nation. Since there is no clear indication in Hume's work as to how far he meant the general point of view to extend, I do not think that any real answer can be given to this question. I rather think that actually, no clear answer is necessary. Men in different times and places do not vary, on Hume's view, that widely in their reactions to similar characters of mind, and in their views of such characters, so that extending the general point of view to all mankind will not really achieve much more than extending it to the citizens of one's own nation. Sympathy must obviously extend beyond the interests of the observer and his relations and friends, but once it is extended beyond particular interests, the particular situation is considered as a member of a class of similar situations, and sympathy ranges over the general class, a general point of view will have been taken, making questions of whether this includes only one nation or all of mankind largely irrelevant. We are, after all, supposed to be able to appreciate our enemy's virtues, (which might present problems for the artificial virtue of allegiance to nations in time of war).

I have several times commented that if taking a general point of view is a necessary condition of moral evaluation, and sympathy is a necessary condition of taking a general point of view, then the operation of sympathy is a necessary condition of moral evaluation. This position was

of course discussed in the previous chapter, where I argued
that there did not appear to be any good reason why the oper-
ation of sympathy was necessary in the arousal of feelings
of moral approval or disapproval in certain of the other-
regarding natural virtues. It will be remembered that I
argued then that if the observer was one of the people af-
fected by the agent, then there seemed to be no reason why
the appropriate feelings of pleasure or pain could not be
directly aroused, without the observer's having to sympathize
with either the agent or any other persons who were affected
by him. However, as was there pointed out (Chapter 5) if it
is true that the appropriate feelings of moral approval or
disapproval cannot be aroused without the taking of a gen-
eral point of view, and hence without the operation of sym-
pathy, the argument of the previous chapter will have to be
rejected. We thus come to the question of whether the tak-
ing of a general point of view is a necessary condition of
moral evaluation, and if, so, in what sense.

It is, first of all, clear that Hume regarded the
taking of a general point of view as a necessary condition
of moral evaluation:

> 'Tis only when a character is considered in gen-
> eral, without reference to our particular interest,
> that it causes such a feeling or sentiment, as de-
> nominates it morally good or evil.   (T.472)

> as everything, which gives uneasiness in human ac-
> tion, upon the general survey, is call'd Vice, and
> whatever produces satisfaction, in the same manner,
> is denominated Virtue...   (T.499)

> Now, in judging of characters, the only interest or
> pleasure, which appears the same to every spectator,
> is that of the person himself, whose character is
> examin'd; or that of persons, who have a connexion
> with him. And tho' such interests and pleasures
> touch us more faintly than our own, yet being more
> constant and universal, they counter-ballance the

latter even in practice, and alone are admitted in
speculation as the standard of virtue and morality.
(T.591)

I think the position is quite clear, and thus we are left
with the problem of why the taking of a general point of
view is necessary.

The first possibility is that it is some sort of
"physical" necessity which Hume has in mind here. This
might be deduced from his claim that:

'Tis only when a character is considered in gen-
eral...that it causes such a feeling or sentiment,
as denominates it morally good or evil.   (T.472)

The argument would then be, that as a matter of "physical"
fact, the feelings appropriate to moral approval or disap-
proval could not be aroused without the prior taking of a
general point of view. On Hume's analysis of causation,
what this then means is that the feelings of moral approval
and disapproval do not ever occur unless preceded by the
taking of a general point of view. This point could pre-
sumably only be established by introspection, since there
seems to be no theoretical reason why this must be so. As
on all questions to be settled by introspection, I have no
argument, being unable to locate all these different and
distinct feelings myself.

That this position does imply, however, is that the
feelings of moral approval and disapproval are phenomeno-
logically distinct from other feelings of pleasure and pain,
and can be distinguished on this basis.

'Tis true, those sentiments, from interest and
morals, are apt to be confounded, and naturally
run into one another. It seldom happens, that
we do not think an enemy vicious, and can dis-
tinguish betwixt his opposition to our interest
and real villainy or baseness. But this hinders
not, but that the sentiments are, in themselves,

> distinct; and a man of temper and judgment may pre-
> serve himself from these illusions.   (T.472)

> 'tis evident, that under the term pleasure, we com-
> prehend sensations, which are very different from
> each other, and which have only such a distinct re-
> semblance, as is requisite to make them be express'd
> by the same abstract term....an inanimate object, and
> the character and sentiments of any person may, both
> of them, give satisfaction; but as the satisfaction
> is different, this keeps our sentiments concerning
> them from being confounded, and makes us ascribe vir-
> tue to the one, and not to the other. Nor is every
> sentiment of pleasure or pain, which arises from
> characters and actions, of that peculiar kind, which
> makes us praise or condemn.   (T.472)

I have discussed earlier (Chapter 2) the question of identi-

fying feelings of moral approval and disapproval phenomeno-

logically, and pointed out that it is not entirely clear that

Hume consistently holds this position, since many of the

other statements he makes about moral evaluation are very

difficult to maintain along with this position. I concluded

then that there seems little point in insisting upon the

theory that feelings of moral approval or disapproval are

identifiable phenomenologically, since there are other cri-

teria for identifying them which are more consistent with

the rest of Hume's theory. However, the passages I have

quoted above do seem to suggest that Hume is at this point

relying on the phenomenological point.

In contrast to this point, I should like to note

some other things that Hume says about the general point of

view. For example:

> tho' sympathy be much fainter than our concern for
> ourselves, and a sympathy with persons remote from
> us much fainter than that with persons near and
> contiguous; yet we neglect all these differences in
> our calm judgments concerning the characters of men.
> Besides, that we ourselves often change our situation
> in this particular, we every day meet with persons,
> who are in a different situation from ourselves, and
> who cou'd never converse with us on any reasonable
> terms, were we to remain constantly in that situation

and point of view, which is peculiar to us. The
intercourse of sentiments, therefore, in society
and conversation, makes us form some general in-
alterable standard, by which we may approve or
disapprove of characters and manners. And tho'
the <u>heart</u> does not always take part with those
general notions, or regulate its love or hatred
by them, yet are they sufficient for discourse,
and serve all our purposes in company, in the
pulpit, in the theatre, and in the schools.   (T.603)

We partake of their [those affected by injustice]
uneasiness by sympathy, and as every thing, which
gives uneasiness in human actions, upon the gen-
eral survey, is call'd Vice....   (T.499)

The latter quotation does not make it explicit that only a

particular kind of uneasiness is appropriately a basis for

moral evaluation, but rather suggests that any uneasiness,

upon the general survey, is sufficient. The former quota-

tion is however, more interesting, since it might be inter-

preted as suggesting that the general point of view, is,

like the artificial virtues, a convention established in

order to get around some difficulty in the "natural" way

of doing things. Without taking a general survey, men would

still feel pleasure or pain as the result of the action

prompted by characters of mind, but they would not be able

to make any common judgments on the basis of such reactions,

since the reactions would vary so much between different

people, and with the same person at different times. In

order, then, to be able to carry on a conversation about

these matters, man must learn to view characters from a

certain point of view, the general point of view, and the

pleasure or pain felt, as the result of such a point of

view, will be the same for different people, or for the

same people at different times. Thus common standards of

evaluation will be established. If that is a reasonable

account of the origin of the general point of view, then

either the establishment of this convention results in the creation of a new feeling, or the feeling is more or less that same as any feeling of approval or disapproval, a kind of pleasure or pain, but we only count it as moral when it results from a general survey. I am in favour of accepting the latter alternative, since it is more consistent with the rest of Hume's moral theory than is the former, which presents a number of difficult problems. I have particularly discussed these problems in chapter 2, and mentioned them in passing at other points.

Does this analysis have any validity? I think it does. The passage I quoted above is not the only one in which Hume refers to the need to establish a general standard, so as to allow for agreements in morality.

> Besides, every particular man has a peculiar position with regard to others; and 'tis impossible we cou'd every converse on any reasonable terms, were each of us to consider characters and persons, only as they appear from his peculiar point of view. In order, therefore, to prevent those continual contra-dictions, and arrive at a more stable judgment of things, we fix on some steady and general points of view.... (T.581-582)

> By this reflexion we correct those sentiments of blame, which so naturally arise upon any opposi-tion. (T.583)

> When we form any judgments of persons, merely from the tendency of their characters to our own benefit, or to that of our friends, we find so many contra-dictions to our sentiments in society and conversa-tion, and such an uncertainty from the incessant changes of our situation, that we seek some other standard of merit and demerit, which may not admit of so great variation. (T.583)

All of these passages suggest that the general point of view is another device by which "men correct, by their reason, what is irregular or incommodious in their affections".

On this basis, I think one can conclude that the taking of a general point of view does not arouse distinct and different

feelings identifiable as moral approval or disapproval, but
rather that the feelings of pleasure or pain are only counted
as feelings of moral approval or disapproval if they follow
the taking of a general point of view. Otherwise they are
feelings of pleasure and pain related to interest rather than
morality. We thus have to reject some things that Hume says
about these feelings, but in the end, I do not believe he is
consistent on the matter, and I think my analysis conforms
better with the rest of the theory.

It is of course, not just an arbitrary point that
the feelings of pleasure or pain are not counted as moral
approval or disapproval unless preceded by the taking of a
general point of view. It is, I think, a point about what
morality is actually about. Morality is not only a matter
of considering the interests of oneself and one's relations
and friends, it is also a matter of considering the effects
of a character on a wider or more general range. In a way,
the significance of taking a general point of view is much
like the significance of the artificial virtues; to extend
concerns beyond one's immediate interests and look at mat-
ters from a more long-range and wide-extending view, and
these sorts of considerations are what distinguish morality
from questions of taste. However, I should like to leave
a discussion of the general significance of these and other
points in Hume's theory of morals until a later point.

The establishment of the doctrine of the general
point of view allows for a simple distinction to be made
between moral and non-moral evaluation. I have of course
commented several times earlier that in general Hume is
reluctant to make such a distinction. However, when I

considered the question in chapter 2, I did so in terms of the objects of evaluation, rather than in terms of the process. I argued then, for example, that natural abilities ought not to be the subject of moral evaluation, since they were to a high degree involuntary, and I did not regard involuntary qualities as a suitable subject for moral approval or disapproval. The distinction between moral and non-moral evaluation that results from the theory that the taking of a general point of view is a necessary condition of moral evaluation is, however, an entirely different one, and has no relevance that I can see to any distinction on the basis of voluntary and involuntary qualities. This new distinction is simply that unless a general point of view is taken in regard to any character or quality of mind, the feelings of approval or disapproval which result are non-moral rather than moral. It is presumably irrelevant what sorts of qualities are considered, although it is of course true that Hume's theory requires that they be qualities of mind, or dispositions to have certain sorts of motives, whether the approval is moral or non-moral; the distinction is based solely on the manner in which the observer goes about getting the feelings of pleasure or pain. If he has not taken a general point of view, the evaluation is simply non-moral. If he has taken such a point of view, then of course, it does not necessarily follow that the evaluation is moral, since there is always the possibility that some sort of error has occurred in the process which might not permit the evaluation to be properly termed moral; for example, as I mentioned above, the subject might not be a quality of mind.

This brings us directly to the question of the

possibility of error in moral evaluation. One of the most
intriguing implications of the principle of a general point
of view is that it appears to allow the observer to be mis-
taken about whether or not he has actually made a moral eval-
uation, in contrast to a non-moral or interested evaluation.

> 'Tis only when a character is considered in general,
> without reference to our particular interest, that
> it causes such a feeling or sentiment as denominates
> it morally good or evil. 'Tis true, those sentiments,
> from interest and morals, are apt to be confounded,
> and naturally run into one another. It seldom happens,
> that we do not think an enemy vicious, and can dis-
> tinguish betwixt his opposition to our interest and
> real villainly or baseness. But this hinders not,
> but that the sentiments are, in themselves, distinct;
> and a man of temper and judgment may preserve himself
> from these illusions.   (T.472)

If we were to accept the theory that feelings of moral ap-
proval or disapproval, qua feelings, could only be aroused
by the taking of a general point of view (which theory I
have rejected) one possible error would be a simple one of
phenomenologically mis-identifying the feelings which one
had, in the sense of "I thought it was a feeling of moral
approval, but actually I made a mistake, and it was the
feeling of interested approval that I was experiencing".
This appears to be the sort of error which Hume is referring
to in this passage. If one does not accept that theory, it
would still be possible to argue, along much the same line,
that although one had thought that the feelings of pleasure
one had were feelings of moral approval, actually they were
of interested approval, either since one had failed to take
a general point of view, or because the feelings of interest
simply overwhelmed any feelings that might have resulted on
the basis of taking a general point of view. On this point,
Hume says:

But however the general principle of our blame

or praise may be corrected by those other prin-
ciples, 'tis certain, that they are not alto-
gether efficacious, nor do our passions often
correspond entirely to the present theory...
Here we are contented with saying, that reason
requires such an impartial conduct, but that 'tis
seldom we can bring ourselves to it, and that our
passions do not readily follow the determination
of our judgment.   (T.583)

The demands of immediate interest may simply overtake what-

ever feelings of moral approval or disapproval one might

have had, and yet one might still think that the feelings

one had were of moral approval or disapproval, since one

had taken a general survey of the character.

If one holds the theory that it is whether or not

the feelings of pleasure or pain are aroused as a result of

having taken a general point of view, that distinguishes

moral from non-moral approval or disapproval, then another

kind of error is possible. One might have the appropriate

feelings of approval or disapproval, and yet, since one had

failed to take a general point of view, these feelings could

not be correctly counted as moral. I think there are two

distinct cases here, that in which the observer had not

even attempted to take a general point of view, and that

in which he attempted, but in some way failed. In the first

case, the situation is quite simple. The observer, having

feelings of pleasure or pain, could mistakenly regard them

as feelings of moral approval or disapproval, believing that

he had, or forgetting that he had not, considered the char-

acter or quality being evaluated from a general point of

view. In such a case, although he might think his evalua-

tion was moral, it clearly would not be.

The second case is more complex. This is the case

where the observer might genuinely attempt to consider the

character from a general point of view, but in some way fail.
He may, for example, have discounted his own feelings as di-
rectly affected by the character, and yet have only considered
the character from the point of view of his relations or
friends. This would not count as taking a general point of
view. On the other hand, he may have discounted the feelings
of himself and his relations and friends, and yet have con-
sidered the situation purely in the particular case, and not,
as I have earlier argued is necessary, as an example of a
class of situations. This again would presumably not count
as a general point of view, and the resulting feelings could
not properly count as moral. Finally, there is of course the
possibility that the point of view was just not sufficiently
"general", to make the resulting feelings count as moral.
This kind of error is only possible if there is some definite
range of sympathy underlying a general point of view which
must be met before the view truly counts as "general". I
have argued at an earlier point that it is not clear whether
Hume thinks there is such a definable range, and so I am not
entirely sure that this is a possible source of error for
Hume.

A last possible source of error is based on the claim
that there is some sort of causal relationship between the
taking of a general point of view and the production of feel-
ings of moral approval or disapproval. If it is argued that
the feelings of pleasure or pain are only truly counted as
moral if they are caused by the taking of a general point of
view, then it is always possible, for one to be mistaken
about causal connections. No propositions concerning matters
of fact are necessarily true. All these possible sources of

error do not result in mistaken moral judgments, of the sort
that I have earlier argued are possible if the observer does
not recognise a sufficient number of the facts about a situa-
tion. They result rather in a mistake about whether a moral
evaluation has actually occurred. The principle of the gen-
eral point of view as a necessary condition of moral evalua-
tion allows for a mistaken belief about the nature of one's
feelings of approval or disapproval. Allowing for such mis-
taken brings Hume's theory a bit further away from the simple
subjectivism that it might at first have appeared to be. To
know whether one morally approves or disapproves of some
character involves, it now appears, knowing more than just
whether one feels pleasure or pain when contemplating it;
it also involves knowing whether one has contemplated it from
the correct point of view.

There is one final point which might be made about
the taking of a general point of view, before leaving the
subject. In chapter 4 I referred to the possibility of a
conflict between the sorts of actions dictated by the nat-
ural and the sorts of actions dictated by the artificial
virtues. I then commented that this sort of conflict was
representative of a very common kind of moral dilemma, and
might be regarded as a conflict between taking a particular
or a general point of view. An example of such a dilemma
would be where benevolence might lead us to feel approval
of an act of injustice which is beneficial to a particular
man, whereas justice would lead us to feel disapproval to-
wards it. At that point I said that the general tone of
Hume's work suggested that the dictates of the artificial
virtue were to be followed rather than those of the natural

virtue. I think that the notion of taking a general point
of view provides us with a reason for this. It appears to
me that in the case of at least some of the conflicts which
might arise between natural and artificial virtues, the arti-
ficial virtue represents the feeling arrived at after having
taken a general point of view, and thus represents the truly
moral decision. Although our natural feelings of benevolence
may lead in the opposite direction, a decision or evaluation
of the character, based on these feelings would not be, in
such a situation, a truly moral decision or evaluation. This
does not mean that moral evaluations of natural virtues are
made without taking a general point of view. Obviously a
general point of view must be taken in evaluating the natural
virtues as well as in evaluating the artificial virtues, or
else the evaluation will not count as moral. What it means
is that in at least some cases of conflict, the general point
of view leads to the approving of the artificial virtue rather
than the natural virtue. This point of course also ties in
with the claim that the general point of view is, like the
artificial virtues, to some degree a convention placed upon
the natural operations of our feelings and motives. This does
not make the process "unnatural", as the analogy with sense
perception shows.

> Such corrections are common with regard to all the
> senses; and indeed 'twere impossible we cou'd ever
> make use of language, or communicate our sentiments
> to one another, did we not correct the momentary ap-
> pearance of things, and overlook our present situa-
> tion.   (T.582)

Although the observer in sense perception may change his
position to take the point of view leading to the clearest
view of the object, this is not unnatural, it is merely a
matter of not taking all views as representing or being

the correct one. The same is true of moral "perception",

which is no less natural.

CHAPTER 7

The Moral Agent and Conclusion

Up until this point, with reference to both sympathy and the taking of a general point of view, I have been talking solely in terms of the observer, the man who has the feelings of moral approval and disapproval as the result of contemplating the character or actions of another man. Both of these aspects of moral evaluation could be extended so as to have relevance for the motives of the agent himself. As a matter of fact, it may be possible to distinguish between the artificial and natural virtues to some extent on the basis of the different roles these two operations play in guiding the actions of the agent. The significant difference has to do with the taking of a general point of view. Although it is not clear that the agent must take, or presuppose, a general point of view when acting under a natural virtue, it is certainly clear that he must when acting under an artificial virtue.

The natural virtues may be divided into two classes, those I have called the self-regarding virtues, such as prudence or frugality, and those I have termed other-regarding virtues, such as benevolence. The motives underlying the self-regarding natural virtues would it appears to me, involve neither the taking of a general point of view, nor the operation of sympathy. It makes no sense to speak of the agent's discounting his own interests in acting under a self-regarding virtue, since it is surely his own interests which such a virtue serves. He might, I suppose, consider any particular action he intended to do under some sort of

general aspect, that is, as a member of a class of similar actions, but merely to do this, and not to discount his own interests, is not to take a general point of view. In any case, such a long-range consideration seems out of place with the natural virtues on the whole, since it would not be in the spirit of such passages as:

> no action can be virtuous, or morally good, unless there be in human nature some motive to produce it, distinct from the sense of its morality.   (T.479)

As I argued in chapter 3, a man with a natural virtue such as frugality would probably be characterized as having not only the general desire to be frugal, but as having also a disposition to have the desire to be frugal in specific situations. Such particular desires do not seem entirely suited to contain such long-range or general considerations as taking a general point of view would appear to require. As for sympathy, sympathy is surely only necessary in a motive when other people are involved, if them, and this is not immediately the case with the self-regarding virtues. Sympathy might be necessary were an agent to stop and consider his own motives morally, but this would be separate from the actual motives.

Those natural virtues which are other-regarding present a somewhat different picture. A man acting from a motive typical of such other-regarding natural virtues as benevolence would be, in the very act of having such a motive as a desire to help someone else, discounting his own interests. However, such a motive is normally directed towards one person, or towards a small group of people, but not towards all of society, or whatever range is required for a general point of view.

In general, it may be affirm'd, that there is no
such passion in human minds, as the love of man-
kind, merely as such, independent of personal
qualities, of services, or of relation to ourself.
(T.481)

The general point of view involves discounting not only one's

own feelings, but also the feelings of those people directly

connected with one, and I would think that this latter class

of people is exactly the class towards whom most benevolent

motives would be directed. As well, the comment about the

inappropriateness of the consideration of this particular in-

stance as one of a class of such instances seems as applic-

able to the other-regarding natural virtues as to the self-

regarding natural virtues.

With reference to the relation of sympathy to the

other-regarding natural virtues, it might be argued that

one could not have an other-regarding motive without the

operation of sympathy. However, I do not think that this

is true. It may be true that the feeling of pleasure a

benevolent man has as a result of seeing another person happy

is an example of the operation of sympathy, and with this I

would agree. However, this pleasure is distinct from such

desires as the desire to _make_ another person happy. One can

have this desire, it seems to me, without the other person's

being unhappy, or without knowing whether he is happy or un-

happy. In any case, recognition of another person's feelings

is not the same as sympathizing with them. The latter pre-

supposes the former, but is not identical with it; it goes

beyond it and is a separate operation. I am not, however,

entirely sure that Hume would have agreed with this analysis.

In discussing the artificial virtues he implies that sympathy

is the source of our interest in the good of society, and hence if our desire to perform acts of justice stems from this interest, sympathy will be a necessary condition of our feeling the appropriate motives. I have of course discussed this in Chapter 5. One might extrapolate from this that any concern for or interest in the good of another involves sympathy, and hence our interest in the good of our friends or relations will likewise depend on the operation of sympathy. In other words, one might take from Hume's comments about the role of sympathy with regard to the artificial virtues, that any interest in another person depends on the operation of sympathy. I have already explained why I do not think this is necessary in Hume's system, and there are some statements made by Hume which might indicate that he also did not think it necessary.

> as the good of society, where our own interest is
> not concern'd, or that of our friends, pleases
> only by sympathy....   (T.577,
>   italics mine)

> Now the pleasure of a stranger, for whom we have
> no friendship, pleases us only by sympathy.   (T.576)

Both of these passages suggest that sympathy is needed only when the person in question is not a friend, which of course implies that if the person in question is a friend, the operation of sympathy is unnecessary. What this shows about Hume's view of the other-regarding natural virtues, it seems to me, is that if they are directed towards friends, the operation of sympathy is not needed, whereas, if they are directed towards strangers, it may be required. This suggests to me that he believed that one would not naturally feel benevolence towards strangers, but only towards friends. There is no good reason to believe this to be true in all

cases. I see no reason why feelings of benevolence could

not be immediately felt towards strangers. In the end, I

think that all that can be clearly said about this point is

that I do not see any theoretical reason why one could not

have the motives typical of the natural virtues without the

operation of sympathy, but that it is not at all clear that

Hume would agree with me, or what his own position would ac-

tually be. The other-regarding natural virtues, or the mo-

tives underlying them, do not then involve the taking of a

general point of view, and might not involve the operation

of sympathy. This of course is not to say that evaluating

these virtues does not involve either principle; obviously

both are necessary for evaluation, but evaluation of such

motives is distinct from having them.

The artificial virtues, both self-regarding and

other-regarding, present a different picture with regard to

these two operations. In my discussion of the motives under-

lying the artificial virtues in chapter 4, I pointed out

that the existence of such virtues and such motives presup-

posed the recognition that some set of rules or conventions

was to the advantage of society in general. I further pointed

out in that chapter that the motive to act in accordance with

an artificial virtue must include within it some recognition

of the point of following such conventions, or else it re-

duces simply to a blind desire to follow rules. Although

such a blind desire is possible, and might even have been

regarded by Hume as being desirable, I argued that it could

only be a secondary sort of motive, and itself presupposed

the existence of a motive involving a recognition of the

value of the conventions or rules. This desire must then

presuppose the operation of sympathy, since:

> the good of society, where our own interest is
> not concern'd, or that of our friends, pleases
> only by sympathy.   (T.577)

and:

> we have no such extensive concern for society
> but from sympathy.   (T.579)

Moreover, Hume argues that:

> Thus it appears, that sympathy is a very power-
> ful principle in human nature, that it has a
> great influence on our taste of beauty, and that
> it produces our sentiment of morals in all the
> artificial virtues. From thence we may presume,
> that it also gives rise to many of the other vir-
> tues....   (T.577-578)

In other words, he appears to be arguing that sympathy is in

some sense the source of the artificial virtues, by which I

would take him to mean that these virtues and their typical

motives could not exist without the operation of sympathy.

It is thus quite clear that sympathy is involved in the ac-

tual virtues as well as in evaluating the virtues, in the

case of the artificial virtues.

The taking of a general point of view seems likewise

to be a necessary part of such motives. To take a general

point of view is to abstract oneself and one's immediate

friends from the situation, and also to consider a partic-

ular event, situation, or motive, as one of a class of such

events, situations or motives. This appears to be exactly

what is required in the motives of the artificial virtues.

The recognition of the value of a set of rules or conven-

tions is a recognition that they are of value to all of

society, not just to one's particular group, and that it is

not any particular example of the operation of such a vir-

tue that is to be considered, but the effect of the general

following of the conventions that is the source of this value.

If this recognition is involved in the motive, then the typ-
ical motive underlying an artificial virtue involves the
taking of a general point of view. I do not think it would
be totally misleading to say that the artificial virtues ap-
pear to be conventional patterns of taking a general point of
view, with regard, each of them, to some particular aspect
of social life.

It can thus be seen that the operations of the prin-
ciples of sympathy and the general point of view allow one
to make a distinction between the artificial and natural
virtues. The motives underlying the artificial virtues in-
volve both the operation of sympathy and the taking of a gen-
eral point of view, whereas the motives underlying the natural
virtues do not involve the taking of a general point of view,
and probably do not necessarily involve the operation of sym-
pathy, although this latter point is not clear in reference
to the other-regarding natural virtues.

In the previous chapter I commented that the taking
of a general point of view is a necessary condition of moral
evaluation, and that thus the ability to take such a point
of view was a necessary condition of a man's being a true
moral agent, in the sense of his being able to evaluate mor-
ally the motives and characters of himself or other people.
I would like to expand this point to cover the notion of
the moral agent, insofar as he is considered to be a man
capable of having certain moral virtues. None of the points
which follow, as none of the previous points about the roles
of sympathy and the taking of a general point of view in
the motives of an agent, are contained within the text of
the Treatise. They are all rather constructions from the

general outline given by Hume, in an attempt to see what the
principles he sets forth might imply for the areas of moral-
ity which he does not discuss. This coming section in par-
ticular cannot be found in any of the particular points Hume
makes about morality, and is completely speculative, although
I believe that it is all consistent with,the points he does
make. I do not believe that Hume himself would have agreed
with much of what I am about to suggest.

It appears to me that Hume divides the motives under-
lying the virtues into three classes, roughly, those in which
the agent's interests only are considered, those in which the
interests of those who are directly affected by the actions
and the motives of the agent are also considered, and finally
those in which the interests of all of society, however wide
a group that might be, are considered. The first class ob-
viously coincides with the self-regarding natural virtues,
the second, with the other-regarding natural virtues, and
the third, with the artificial virtues. It is only in the
third class, as we have noted, that the taking of a general
point of view is required of the agent. I should like to
suggest that it is only those agents who are capable of
having, or who do have, virtues of the third class who can
truly be counted as moral agents. A man who has only self-
regarding virtues, that is, a man who takes only his own
interests into account in all his motives for acting would
surely not, in any sense, be a moral agent. It might be
argued that such a man would be immoral, since he takes only
his own interests into account, but this is not the sort of
man I was intending to discuss here. I am rather using the
case of the man who is incapable of considering the interests

of others, and who would not therefore have any other-regard-
ing vices, as well as not having any other-regarding virtues.
I am thus using the case of the man who would be incapable
of having any virtues of the second or third classes, since
the only interests he is capable of taking into account are
his own. This man, as I said, just does not count as a
moral agent. Interestingly enough, Hume does not seem to
consider that such a man could even exist.

> We may only affirm on this head, that if there ever
> was any thing, which cou'd be call'd natural in
> this sense, the sentiments of morality certainly
> may; since there never was any nation of the world,
> nor any single person in any nation, who was utterly
> depriv'd of them, and who never, in any instance,
> shew'd the least approbation or dislike of manners.
> These sentiments are so rooted in our constitution
> and temper, that without entirely confounding the
> human mind by disease or madness, 'tis impossible
> to extirpate and destroy them.   (T.474)

This passage of course refers to evaluation, rather than mo-
tives, but since it is arguing that no man has ever lacked
the ability to feel moral approval or disapproval, and such
approval or disapproval involves the taking of a general
point of view, it can be deduced that there never existed
any man incapable of taking a general point of view. How-
ever, whether or not such a man ever did exist, if he did,
he could not be counted as a moral agent.

The second case is that of the man capable of having
other-regarding natural virtues, as well as self-regarding
ones, but not of having artificial virtues. This would be
the man who could consider his own interests and also those
of people directly affected by his actions, but not the in-
terests of society in general. An example might be the
man, beloved of second-rate American gangster movies, who
is kind to his old mother, but who robs banks, steals cars,

and generally takes whatever he wants for himself or for his
old mother. Most importantly, he can not understand why he
should do otherwise, so that the notion of taking a general
point of view simply makes no sense to him. I am definitely
not including in this class people who feel that society has
"done them in", and so they have a right to take what they
can get; since these people would presumably feel that if
society had not treated them so badly, they would not have
this right. The notion of the requirement of taking a gen-
eral point of view would make sense to such people, but they
would argue that society is so structured that they must con-
sider themselves first, and not take a general point of view
in deciding to act. The people I am referring to are those
to whom the notion would not make sense. They are a diffi-
cult case, since they do appear to have some "moral sense",
at least in regard to those people related to them, or their
friends. However, I would like to argue that in the end,
these people too do not really count as moral agents, and
that the ability to take a general point of view, and to be
able to incorporate this view into one's motives for acting,
is a necessary condition of being a moral agent in the full
sense of the word which they simply do not meet. Being
able to take into account the feelings of the few people
with whom one comes into contact, and even being able to
consider a particular motive or action as one of a class of
such motives and actions, is not sufficient to count as
taking a general point of view. There must also be the
operation of sympathy with society in general. The case
is, I think, difficult because it is difficult to see where
to draw the line. The man who considers only himself and

his old mother appears not to be a moral agent, in the complete sense; but what about the man who is only capable of sympathising with the interests of the people in his own city, or his class? In one way, he might be regarded as taking a general point of view, since he is discounting the interests of himself and his immediate relations and friends, and sympathizing with a larger class of people, some of whom he has presumably never met. However, in another way he is not, since he is considering the interests only of a limited class. This is once again the problem of deciding how wide a class a man must sympathise with, before he has truly taken a general point of view. I had no real answer when I discussed the problem earlier, nor do I now. But some extensions of sympathy clearly are not enough, others clearly are, and there is a wide area in the middle where it is not clear whether a man could be counted a moral agent or not.

The man discussed above, who, I have claimed, is not truly a moral agent, might be regarded as being-half-way there. He at least has some of the characteristics required of the moral agent, although he lacks what appears to me to be one necessary condition, that of the ability to take the general point of view.

The last case is that of the man capable of having all three classes of the virtues mentioned; that is, the man capable of taking his own, his friends' and relations', and society's interests into account in his motives. In other words, the man truly capable of taking a general point of view. I think this man is a clear case of what is meant by a "moral agent". In his motives, he considers not only himself, not only his relations and friends, but also

society as a whole, and he is capable of discounting his
own interests and those of his friends in his motive, in
order to take a truly general point of view. I am not sug-
gesting that a true moral agent must always take a general
point of view in his motives, since I think he must be cap-
able of the other classes of virtues as well. I am only
suggesting that he must be capable of so doing, and that
the notion of taking a general point of view does make sense
to him, both as a concept and as a demand of moral action,
even though he might not always take this point of view.
Since this is the requirement for making true moral evalua-
tions, it is clear that there is a strong link between be-
ing a moral agent, and being able to evaluate morally; a
man who fulfills the criteria for one position fulfills at
the same time the criteria for the other.

In the end, then, I would argue that the signifi-
cance of the operations of sympathy and taking a general
point of view is that they provide the criteria for having
moral virtues and being able to make truly moral evaluations.
They also, incidentally, provide some criteria for distin-
guishing between the natural and the artificial virtues,
and allow one to argue that only the man who is capable of
having the artificial virtues is truly a moral agent. The
attificial virtues as described in the Treatise thus became
a very important part of morality and play a rather dif-
ferent role in the whole scheme of morality from that played
by the natural virtues.

In this thesis on Hume's theory of morality, as out-
lined in the third book of A Treatise of Human Nature, I
have considered three basic topics, the moral virtues, the

operation of sympathy, and the doctrine of the general point
of view. In general what I have attempted to do with regard
to these three topics is to make clear what Hume meant by
the terms involved, to trace the relationships between the
various factors, to attempt to clear up any confusions or
inconsistencies which emerged in tracing such relationships,
and, in general, to attempt to present a consistent theory
of morality based on the basic principles which Hume himself
sets forth, departing from Hume's own account only when that
account appeared to me to be inconsistent, or, occasionally,
when certain conditions he laid down appeared to me to be
superfluous or unnecessary. In the end, what I hope to have
achieved is a clearer understanding and analysis of certain
features of Hume's moral theory, and what might be called an
"improved" or "edited" version of the theory. I have not
attempted a general evaluation of the theory, although I have
at several different points indicated my disagreement with
individual points that Hume made. In the long run, I agree
with a number of the points he makes, such as the requirement
of the general point of view, and disagree with others, such
as his reluctance to distinguish between moral and non-moral
approval on the basis of the objects of approval. I regard
his account as enlightening at some points, such as the dis-
tinction between artificial and natural virtues, and inade-
quate at others, such as his account of moral duty. My own
biases in ethics are more Kantian, but I do not think Hume
ought to be disregarded or rejected on that account, since
a number of the points he makes are very suggestive, and are
apt to be ignored by people who consider ethics mainly from
the point of view of duty. I think we do evaluate people on

the basis of the sorts of characters they have, and not just
on the basis of whether they conscientiously do what they
believe is right. I think such evaluation is justifiable,
and ought not to be ignored. However, I do not think that
is all, or even the most part, of morality, and I think
Hume's theory ought to be tempered with some Kantian duties.

To finish, I would like briefly to summarize the con-
clusions I have reached in this examination of certain prob-
lems in Hume's moral theory. I first of all considered Hume's
account of the virtues, in general, and concluded that what
Hume meant by a "virtue" was a disposition to have motives
of a certain sort, these motives being of a type which could
exist in people prior to there being any concept of morality,
and not including in them any reference to the moral value
of having such a motive or acting from such a motive. In ex-
amining the motives typical of the natural and the artificial
virtues, I came to a number of different conclusions. In
reference to the natural virtues, I argued that the underly-
ing motives should be analyzed in terms of purposes, rather
than in terms of desiring to do specific sorts of actions,
since the circumstances would determine what action should
be done to fulfill a certain specific purpose, such as de-
siring to help another person. I claimed that analysis in
terms of specific actions would in any case conflict with
Hume's claim that motives rather than actions were the ob-
ject of moral approval. I also argued that there was, in
the case of the natural virtues, no significant difference
between the general desire, such as the general desire to
be benevolent, and a disposition to have particular desires
in particular situations, such as the desire to help <u>that</u>

drowning man, insofar as either could be considered the under-
lying motive of the virtue, and insofar as the general desire
could be regarded as merely a generalization of the partic-
ular desires.

In the case of the artificial virtues, I argued that
the motives underlying these virtues could not be considered
to have met either of Hume's original criteria for motives
underlying virtues, in that they were neither the sorts of
motives which could exist prior to the concept of morality,
since they were aroused by the recognition of the value of
certain conventions, nor did they fail to include a reference
to the moral value of such a motive. I also argued that it
might be possible to draw a distinction between particular
desires to act justly and the general desire to do so, and
that this might be one way of making at least the particular
desires free of a regard to moral value. In the end though,
I considered this point as relatively unconvincing. I also
suggested that such a distinction might weaken still further
the already weak claim that Hume was a utilitarian.

In the chapter on sympathy, I first of all discussed
the mechanics of sympathy, and considered a disagreement be-
tween Ardal and Hendenius as to whether Hume considered the
operation of sympathy as a necessary condition of all moral
evaluation of virtues. I argued that, considering sympathy
by itself, Hendenius appeared to be correct, but that, since
the operation of sympathy was a necessary condition of
taking a general point of view, and the taking of a general
point of view a necessary condition of all moral evaluation,
Ardal's claim that sympathy was a necessary condition of all
moral evaluation was clearly valid. I suggested that with

the joint operations of the doctrine of sympathy and its
opposite, the doctrine of comparison, any reaction by an
observer to a motive could be accounted for, and that this
should be counted a flaw in Hume's theory, since it makes
it logically irrefutable. I concluded the chapter by con-
sidering the possible errors about moral evaluation which
could occur if the operation of sympathy were considered
a necessary condition of moral evaluation.

The chapter on the general point of view began with
an analysis of what Hume meant by a "general point of view",
and concluded that it meant not only discounting one's own
feelings, whether of interest or complete uninterest, and
placing oneself in a more or less midway point for consider-
ing the motive or character, but also meant considering the
particular motive or character as an example of a class of
such motives or characters, and thus considering the motive
or character in general, as well as taking a non-specific
point of view of this character. I suggested that the taking
of a general point of view had many things in common with
the establishment of the artificial virtues, in that this
too might be regarded as a convention established for the
better convenience of all of society, and not as a process
of evaluation which might occur before such considerations
about fulfilling common interests were taken. I then con-
sidered the point that taking a general point of view was
a necessary condition of making moral evaluations, the
possible errors which might result from this, and finally
extended the doctrine to cover motives as well as evalua-
tions, concluding that the doctrine of the general point of
view and the operation of sympathy presupposed by this

doctrine provided criteria for being a moral agent. My final
conclusion was that the doctrine of the general point of view,
the operation of sympathy, and the concept of an artificial
virtue between them established a possible picture of what
it means to be a moral agent, and that this point alone makes
them of great value, both in Hume's moral theory, and in any
philosophical consideration of morality.

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