



Hume, Motivation and Morality

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HUME, MOTIVATION AND MORALITY *

Hume remarks, in the Abstract, that his account of the passions in Book II of the Treatise has 'laid the foundation' (A 7)¹ for his theory of morals. Páll Ardal has shown² how Hume's theory of certain indirect passions (pride, humility, love, hatred) underpins his theory of the evaluation of character. I propose to explore the links between Hume's account of motivation and his treatment of an agent's moral assessment of prospective action. Where Ardal stresses the moral spectator, my focus is on the agent. Hume himself attends primarily to the moral spectator, but the agent's perspective is central in two of his chief arguments concerning morals, that for the thesis that moral distinctions are derived from a moral sense, and that for the artificiality of justice. I shall take it that the argument of Treatise II, iii, 3 ("Of the influencing motives of the will") provides the framework for analysis: acting for moral reasons is like acting for any other reason; citing his moral principles to explain a man's actions is like citing his desire to preserve his health as an explanation of his taking exercise; deliberating about moral matters is like pondering the purchase of a pair of shoes. Of course there are differences; I shall look to them shortly. It is essential, however, to begin with the similarities.

To a first approximation, the central doctrine is that the reasons that explain actions are rational causes of those actions. Reasons for actions are constituted by suitably related desires and beliefs; volitions are somehow implicated in intentional actions. Reasons are causes; the desires and beliefs that constitute reasons cause volitions,

and thus actions. They are rational causes: there are links of special kinds between the contents of the desires and beliefs that constitute an agent's reasons for what he does, and the content of the volitions implicated in the actions done. Hume is at pains to deny that "reason [here: belief] alone can ... be a motive to any action of the will" (T 413). But he insists there are "two principal parts [of human nature], which are requisite in all its actions, the affections and understanding" (T 493). I suggest that by "affections" he here means specifically (if broadly) desires, and so both the "direct passions" of desire and aversion and such "indirect passions" as benevolence, anger, pity, compassion and malice.

Hume's official doctrines both of desires and of volitions are unsatisfactory as they stand; he treats each as simple impressions. To be sure, these simple impressions are said always to be accompanied by thoughts of (in Hume's phrase) their objects. Even such complex states, however, can play no satisfactory role in psychological theory. The insights that Hume's official doctrines mishandle can, I suggest, be incorporated into more defensible, and more-or-less Humean, analyses of the internal structure of desire and volition. Having made efforts along these lines elsewhere,³ however, I shall here concentrate on other features of desire and volition that are germane to Hume's moral psychology.

Desires and volitions are alike in two linked respects, among others: neither takes a truth value (and so each differs from belief); each is a conative, not a cognitive, psychological state (and so, again, each differs from belief). Because desires and volitions are not capable of "an agreement or

disagreement either to the real relations of ideas, or to real existence and matter of fact" it is "impossible ... they can be pronounced either true or false" (T 458). Their general functional role is that of "propense and averse motions of the mind" (T 574). To be sure, there are differences. The principal difference is that of specific functional location: desires are constituents in reasons for acting; volitions are constituents of (or otherwise implicated in) actions done for such reasons. This functional difference is tied to differences of content.

To grasp the many relations among belief, desire and volition, when the first two serve as reason for (and so cause of) the third, it is useful⁴ to plot their causal relations onto the elements in an Aristotelian practical syllogism. Desires function as causally salient major premises, beliefs as minors, volitions as conclusions. To understand the interplay of desire, belief and volition is, at least in part, to understand the relations of content among all three, the features that distinguish both major premise and conclusion from minor premise, and the requisite differences between major premise and conclusion.

Hume is neither a hedonist nor an egoist with respect to the content of desire. There are, it must be admitted, some appearances to the contrary; to interpret them properly Hume's reader must be alert to distinguish questions concerning the hedonic character of desire, or the role of satisfaction in the generation, reinforcement and extinction of desires, or the role of self-interest in the generation of desires, on the one hand, from questions about the content of desires, on the other. Hume argues explicitly that some desires are directed

not towards pleasure and the avoidance of pain but towards other things. Such desires "produce good and evil, and proceed not from them, like the other affections" (T 439). Examples cited include "hunger, lust, and a few other bodily appetites" (T 439). Despite the importance he attaches to self-interest Hume's position on egoism is equally clear. Benevolence and anger (as first introduced in the Treatise) are desires directed towards the well-being or ill-being of others, those whom one loves or hates. In the second Enquiry he rejects the "selfish hypothesis" (E 298) that attempts to construe ostensible regard for others as, at bottom, self-love. Of course, one's love for others rests, in Hume's view, on the pleasure one derives from their actions and qualities; and it is one's friends, one's relations, one's benefactors, those who have pleased one, who are the chief objects of one's benevolence. It remains true, in Hume's view, that it is the other's satisfaction that one desires to forward. In any event one can, via the mechanisms of sympathy, be concerned with the well-being of individuals who are, in the requisite sense, strangers.⁵

Types of desires, just as types of other passions, may be divided into two groups, the calm and the violent. A type of desire is calm if and only if normal tokens of the type are calm, in the sense of displaying little emotional agitation or disturbance. Normal tokens of types of violent desires, by contrast, display just such excitation. There can, of course, be atypical tokens of a type. Hume is thinking of desire types when he writes of "certain calm desires and tendencies, which, tho' they be real passions, produce little emotion in the mind, and are more known by their effects than by the immediate feeling or sensation" (T 417). He is

thinking of atypical tokens when he discusses "certain violent emotions of the same kind" (T 417, my emphasis). (The contrast between calm and violent types is made for passions generally, and not just for desires, at T 276).⁶

Two points of some importance about this doctrine must be noted. First, the contrast between calm and violent desires must not be confounded with a distinction, as to causal efficacy, between strong and weak ones. "We must ... distinguish," Hume writes, "betwixt a calm and a weak passion; betwixt a violent and a strong one" (T 419). Moreover, there is no uniform correlation between the violence of a desire and its motivational strength. "In general we may observe, that both these principles [calm desires, violent desires] operate on the will; and where they are contrary, that either of them prevails, according to the general character or present disposition of the person" (T 418). Violence can have its effect, and so techniques for increasing the violence of a (token) desire can serve as techniques for increasing its strength; that's a topic of Treatise II, iii, 4-8. Calm desires may be "corroborated by reflection, and seconded by resolution" (T 437). I take it that, in Hume's view, a calm token desire can, if a token of a calm desire type, be a strong desire.

One may wonder how this could be. A plausible conjecture to explain this will surface later, and will be linked to a second point of importance in Hume's doctrine of calm desires. This is Hume's use of the calmness of some desires as an explanation of the illusion that, in deliberation, there can be direct competition between reason and desire:

What we commonly understand by passion is a violent and sensible emotion of mind, when any good or evil is presented, or any object, which, by the original formation of our faculties, is fitted to excite an appetite. By reason we mean affections of the very same kind with the former; but such as operate more calmly, and cause no disorder in the temper: Which tranquillity leads us into a mistake concerning them, and causes us to regard them as conclusions only of our intellectual faculties (T 437).

Perhaps because of the examples he employs at Treatise II, iii, 3, perhaps because of the structure he assigns to action explanations (E 293), it has become common to attribute to Hume a too simple, and obviously false, view of practical reasoning. On this traditional model a completed bit of practical reasoning is represented by a single practical syllogism, is essentially reasoning about the means to one's ends, and leads deductively to a volition to perform an action thought to serve a given end. When several ends are in question they are, on this model, themselves related as means to ends. As Davidson has convincingly argued, the model is hopelessly inadequate.⁷ It is far from obvious, however, that the model is Hume's.

At the very least it is obvious that, in Hume's view, volitions are arrived at in the light of competing considerations of various sorts. He refers to "an opposition in our motives and principles" (T 421). And, though he rejects one construal of the "combat of passion and reason" (T 413) he recognizes another: a concern for one's long-term interest may "disput[e] ... the preference with any passion or emotion" (T 415). In a notorious passage he writes: "'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the

destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger" (T 416). Whatever the truth of the provocative claim, Hume's picture of what transpires seems plain enough. An agent recognizes both the undesirability of the destruction of the world and the undesirability of the scratching of his finger; he recognizes that of two actions one will contribute to the destruction of the world but prevent the scratching of his finger while the other will have opposite effects; the agent forms a volition to perform some one of the candidate actions. A like situation is envisaged when Hume writes: "'Tis not contrary to reason for me to chuse my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an Indian or person wholly unknown to me" (T 416). The picture, I suggest, is that of an agent deliberating in the light of competing ends and reaching a conclusion in action. To be sure, Hume says almost nothing -- not surprisingly -- to illuminate the suggested transition from competing desires to volition. Indeed it could, I suppose, be insisted that Hume simply does not see such transitions as bits of reasoning. (Perhaps Hume's associationism could be thought to stand in the way here.) It is obvious, however, that such a reading of the examples is not entailed by Hume's denial that it is "contrary to reason" to choose the alternative that, thinking with the plain man, one would think irrational. By that notorious claim Hume simply means that the competing claims are set by one's desires, and that neither volitions nor the desires, whether calm or violent, with which they originate take truth values. Indeed Hume can and would say that certain of the envisaged actions could be unreasonable in one clear sense: they could fail to accord with certain calm desires

of the agent. We shall see more of this as we proceed.

It may be said that, though Hume recognizes the presence of competing considerations in practical reasoning, these considerations (and so the desires that set them) cannot be fundamentally competitive. Unless based directly on false views about Hume's treatment of the objects of desire, this claim must, to have any plausibility, rest on a restriction of the scope for practical reasoning. There cannot, it may be said, be fundamental competition within the domain of specifically moral reasoning. There are, however, no indications that Hume retreats to a monistic theory of the objects of desire when he turns to morality, even if he is (as he may well not be) a descriptive utilitarian. In any event, this would do nothing to eliminate conflict between moral and non-moral considerations (for example, conflict between justice and self-interest acting "at its liberty" (T 480)). Of course, to recognize the presence of fundamentally competitive desires is not to require these desires to be incommensurable.

If Hume does not recognize a motivational role for morality, and a distinctly moral source of motivation, it is impossible to link the central argument of II, iii, 3 and III, i, 1-2 to what follows in the Treatise. If the theory of distinctly moral motivation is not to be fitted to the general theory of motivation just sketched, Hume's theory of moral agents has no foundation in Book II of the Treatise. Hume should hold that the moral assessment of prospective actions is a matter of, or essentially involves, the possession by the agent of distinctly moral desires. He should hold that to explain an agent's actions by citing his moral views is to invoke distinctly moral desires. Hume makes no

explicit attempt to integrate his full-dress account of the assessments made by moral spectators with his more casual remarks about the situation of moral agents. He cannot, however, have failed to see that facts about his moral assessment of persons and their characters have implications for an agent's moral assessment of actions: to value (morally) the traits of justice or benevolence is, pari passu, to value (morally) the performance of just or beneficent actions. It is just here that, within the framework of a Humean moral psychology, distinctly moral desires should be introduced. I suggest that in his treatment of moral agents Hume in fact does -- if too casually -- what he should.

"[I]t may be establish'd as an undoubted maxim," he writes, "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). Virtue requires the availability of motives other than the motive of virtue. Acting in a certain way cannot constitute virtuous action unless human agents, at least in general, have some motive other than a distinctly moral motive to act that way. Showing gratitude or caring for one's children can be virtuous actions, but only because humans (generally) are moved by the non-moral (i.e., not distinctly moral) motives of felt gratitude or parental affection. The several virtues constituting justice likewise require the availability of non-moral (if nonetheless morally valuable) motives for acting in the ways in question (of which, more below). While arguing for this fundamentality of non-moral motives, however, Hume displays his awareness of distinctly moral ones. He contrasts non-moral motives such as generosity or parental affection with "regard to the virtue of the action"

(T 478), "the sense of its [an action's] morality" (T 479), "a sense of duty" (T 478), "sense of morality or duty" (T 479), "regard to ... [an action's] moral obligation" (T 479), "sense of duty and obligation" (T 479), and so on. If to have a non-moral motive towards actions of a certain type is to think actions of that type desirable, to have a distinctly moral motive towards such actions (to think one ought to act in that way, or that one has an obligation to do so, or that to act in that way is the way of virtue) is to think them morally desirable. Noting this common feature of distinctly moral motives is not, of course, to rule out the possibility that Hume would countenance differences, great or small, as between a concern for virtue, say, and a sense of obligation.

What makes these motives distinctly moral? Hume's official answer must be in terms of their phenomenal properties: moral desires, just as the sentiments of the moral spectator, must be viewed as "peculiar sentiments of pain and pleasure" (T 574), must involve "that particular feeling or sentiment, on which moral distinctions depend" (T 591). Of far greater interest is Hume's account of the conditions under which distinctly moral sentiments arise. "[E]very thing, which gives uneasiness in human actions, upon the general survey, is call'd Vice, and whatever produces satisfaction, in the same manner, is denominated Virtue" (T 499). Reference to "the general survey" is reference to an objective (including intersubjective) standpoint from which an individual may respond to an action, trait or person. Putting the point too strongly Hume says that we "over-look our own interest in those general judgments" (T 582), we "forget our own interest in our judgments of this kind" (T 602). He might better say that insofar as we adopt this standpoint we shift

from the biased or partial perspective of natural or non-moral motivation. A person adopting this standpoint does not "consider characters and persons, only as they appear from his peculiar point of view" (T 581); his "imagination adheres to the general views of things, and distinguishes the feelings they produce, from those which arise from our particular and momentary situation" (T 587). By such a shift of perspective we come to "form some general inalterable standard, by which we may approve or disapprove of characters and manners" (T 603). We come likewise to approve or disapprove, as agents, of prospective actions.⁸

Hume holds that in assessment, as in perception, we have a need for, and a proclivity towards, reaching a stable and intersubjective standpoint. We seek consistency over our own attitudes towards things and agreement between our own attitudes and those of others. Consistency is emphasized when Hume writes: "Our situation, with regard both to persons and things, is in continual fluctuation; and a man, that lies at a distance from us, may, in a little time, become a familiar acquaintance" (T 581). Stressing the need for agreement he writes: "every particular man has a peculiar position with regard to others; and 'tis impossible 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" (T 581).

The psychological mechanism of sympathy has, of course, the crucial role to play here. By its means an individual can come to be concerned for the well-being of individuals for whom he has, antecedently, no concern at all, to whom he has no special ties. But sympathy, by itself, is not enough: its

effects are highly variable (T 580-581); and so it need generate no more than a quite limited or a weak concern, whereas moral motivation can often override self-interest. Sympathy must be regularized or stabilized if it is to generate the requisite objective assessments (including the requisite objective motives); only so does one attend indifferently to the needs of those, whoever they be, who are affected by an action, whoever's it is. Hume sketches both problem and solution when he writes:

When we form our judgments of persons, merely from the tendency of their characters to our own benefit, or to that of our friends, we find so many contradictions to our sentiments in society and conversation, 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. Being thus loosen'd from our first station, we cannot afterwards fix ourselves so commodiously by any means as by a sympathy with those, who have any commerce with the person we consider (T 583).

Sympathy, and the need for consistency and intersubjectivity, conspire to generate the moral point of view and so Hume's distinctly moral sentiments. Hume takes objectivity (and so a certain impartiality) to be the essence of morality. He takes moral motives or desires, or so I suggest, as objective ones.

Can anything further be said about the content of Hume's distinctly moral motives? There is some suggestion (as at T 479) that, in Hume's view, to act out of a sense of duty is to be motivated by a desire to be, or to become, a person of a certain sort (a generous person, say, or an affectionate parent). This suggestion has the virtue of intimating a link (where Hume has forged none)

between the spectator's and the agent's perspectives: the agent desires to be the sort of person that, or to possess the characteristics that, qua spectator, he values. It has the additional virtue of allowing a motivational role for moral sentiment in contexts where the valued qualities in question are not themselves motivational. (I think here of Hume's treatment of the similarities and differences between intellectual abilities and the so-called social virtues.) If taken in too exclusive a way, however, the suggestion unduly restricts the scope of moral agency.⁹ One can, after all, and as Hume must recognize, be moved by a sense of duty towards one's children even when devoid of parental affection and persuaded there is little chance of effecting a reform of one's natural motives. In any event it is not at all clear that Hume thinks of the content of moral motives exclusively in the virtue-centered manner suggested. At bottom Humean moral motivation involves a concern for (and so a desire to forward or at least not to frustrate) the interests of those affected by one's own and others' actions. Indeed it is this concern that must, for Hume, underpin an agent's moral motivation to be a person of a certain sort (just, affectionate, generous). Hume can, I suggest, have no reason to reject the idea that distinctly moral motivation can include more narrowly action-centered motivation to keep one's promises, pay one's debts, care for one's children, and refrain from injuring others.

It must be emphasized that the objective desires involved in moral motivation are desires the moral agent actually possesses and that the objective standpoint is the actual standpoint of the agent making a moral assessment of a prospective action. In Hume's words: "to prevent those continual

contradictions, 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 581-582). Neither the desires nor the vantagepoint are those of some hypothetical ideal agent (or spectator!). Obviously such desires are not to be confused with beliefs about desires, including the desires of hypothetical ideal deliberators. Hume's theory of the moral evaluation of prospective actions is not an ideal observer theory in any standard sense of that expression.¹⁰

Objectivity in the sense intended is perfectly compatible with partiality of obvious sorts. It is only my benefactors to whom I owe a debt of gratitude, my children to whom I have a parent's obligations. It may well be that anyone ought to be more concerned with the well-being of some than of others. Objectivity does not eliminate the significance of the different relations in which individuals may stand to one another. Hume notes this when drawing a "corollary" of the "undoubted maxim" cited earlier: "'Tis according to their [the passions'] general force in human nature, that we blame or praise"; "we always consider the natural and usual force of the passions, when we determine concerning vice and virtue" (T 483). In adopting an objective standpoint we impose no normally unattainable requirements on ourselves and others, and no wholesale elimination of partiality.

Moral desires are, I take it, in the class of calm passions. This is now an explicable fact, as is their otherwise surprising motivational strength. Their calmness is a function of their objectivity (see T 603). Their motivational strength arises from the fact that, as objective desires, they answer to

deep psychological and social demands for consistency and interpersonal agreement (see T 591).

It may be objected that, for cases where an agent is possessed of the requisite non-moral motive (as when a father feels affection for his child), the introduction of some distinctly moral motive is, and would be recognized by Hume to be, otiose. Distinctly moral motives are not, however, otiose in terms of description: desires are individuated in terms of their content, descriptions of actions differ as a function of differences in the desires from which they arise, and action explanations differ as well. As Hume was well aware, distinctly moral motives are not motivationally otiose either. For a reason just noted they may possess a motivational strength greater than that of the corresponding non-moral motive. They can second the corresponding non-moral motive. Commenting on "duties, which a man performs as a friend or parent" Hume writes: "A strong inclination may prompt him to the performance: A sentiment of order and moral obligation joins its force to these natural ties: And the whole man, if truly virtuous, is drawn to his duty, without any effort or endeavour" (NHR 89).¹¹ A man may have a non-moral motive for doing what justice requires, but be "blinded by passion, or byass'd by ... contrary temptation" (T 499); were it not for his distinctly moral concerns ("the moral approbation, which attends" justice (T 500)) he would not do the just deeds he does. Mere possession of a motive is no guarantee of its efficacy in one's conduct.

That distinctly moral motivation is not in general otiose is, of course, a consequence of the fact that agents may, though devoid of the non-moral motive that a given virtue presupposes, be moved by moral concern to act in the way that virtue demands.

"When any virtuous motive or principle is common in human nature, a person, who feels his heart devoid of that motive, may hate himself upon that account, and may perform the action without the motive, from a certain sense of duty" (T 479).¹² Such a one "perform[s] an action merely out of regard to its moral obligation" (T 479). An unaffectionate father may be moved, by a sense of duty, to care for his child; a man devoid of feelings of gratitude may nonetheless, moved by his sense of moral obligation, seek to benefit his benefactor. Hume has two situations in mind. The first involves a virtue-centered moral desire; the agent approves morally of affectionate fathers, thus desires that he be an affectionate father, thus is moved to act towards his son as an affectionate father would act towards his son; he hopes thereby to become an affectionate father. In Hume's words: he acts "from a certain sense of duty, in order to acquire by practice, that virtuous principle" (T 479). The second situation introduces an element of self-deception. As just above, the agent is morally motivated to act towards his son as an affectionate father would act towards his son; the effect --- an intended effect? -- is his ceasing to view himself with moral disapproval as failing in parental affection. In Hume's words, he "disguise[s] to himself, as much as possible, his want of" the virtue in question (T 479). Either father differs, of course, from a father who both feels natural affection for his child and (to adapt Hume's words) "has the duty of parental affection in his eye in the attention he gives to his offspring" (see T 478).

It can seem that Hume denies his "undoubted maxim" for the case of the artificial virtues. It

can seem, that is to say, that he denies that the virtues of justice or fidelity depend on non-moral motives in the way that such natural virtues as gratitude or benevolence depend on such motives. "[W]e have [naturally] no real or universal motive for observing the laws of equity," Hume writes, "but the very equity and merit of that observance" (T 483); "we have no motive leading us to the performance of promises, distinct from a sense of duty" (T 518). Happily, such remarks make plain that Hume does recognize distinctly moral motivation, at least for the case of artificial virtues. Unhappily, however, they suggest an argument to the conclusion that Hume should acknowledge distinctly moral motivation only in the case of artificial virtues. Hume admits distinctly moral motivation in the cases of justice and fidelity, it may be said, precisely because he denies that the "undoubted maxim" holds true of them, and so holds that there is no quite general non-moral motive to justice or fidelity. But there must be some motive to justice and fidelity: people do, sometimes, act justly and keep their promises. Special moral motives must, then, be postulated to explain such behavior. On the assumption that the "undoubted maxim" does hold for the natural virtues, however, there is no need for the moral motives in their case, and so Hume should not -- even if he did -- introduce distinctly moral motives for benevolence, gratitude, the performance of one's parental obligations, and so on.

Insofar as this argument rests on the claim that moral motives are otiose if non-moral ones are available, it has already been answered. In any event, it is not just the need to have some motive or other for justice that requires (on the assumed

absence of non-moral candidates) the introduction of a special moral motive. An equally fundamental need is that of accommodating objectivity of motivation. And that, as Hume makes plain, must be done for the natural just as for the artificial virtues. He provides a brief treatment of objectivity, and so of "the moral obligation, or the sentiment of right and wrong" (T 498), when concluding Treatise III, ii, 2 ("Of the origin of justice and property"). Significantly, however, he says that "'twill first be requisite to examine the natural virtues, before we can give a full and satisfactory account of it" (T 498). The promised account is provided at Treatise III, iii, 1, "Of the origin of the natural virtues and vices" (see T 575-584).

The chief difficulty with the argument we are examining, however, is that despite some appearances to the contrary Hume does extend his "undoubted maxim" to the artificial virtues. One can be misled by remarks such as those quoted above, or by Hume's explicit argument (T 480-483) that neither a "concern for our private interest" (T 480), nor a "regard to publick interest" (T 480), nor "a regard to the interests of the party concern'd" (T 482) provides the needed "motive to acts of justice and honesty, distinct from our regard to the honesty" (T 480). What other non-moral motives could there be? In rejecting the first of the three alternatives, however, Hume is not rejecting self-interest as such but "self-love, when it acts at its liberty" (T 480, my emphasis). For when self-love is subject to the conventions that support the requirements of justice -- which is to say when self-love is not acting "at its liberty" -- it does, in Hume's view, provide the needed non-moral motive to justice. Hume is clear on

the point: "'Tis self-love which is [the] real origin" of the "laws of justice" (T 529); "To the imposition ... and observance of these rules, both in general, and in every particular instance, [men] are at first induc'd only by a regard to interest" (T 499); "interest is the first obligation to the performance of promises" (T 523).¹³ The misleading remarks with which we began are subject to an unstated condition: we have no motive leading us to the performance of promises, distinct from a sense of duty, if self-interest is not served by convention. For Hume, of course, the condition does not obtain. That's the crux of his argument from his "undoubted maxim" to the artificiality of justice.

According to Gilbert Harman, "Hume takes the moral motive to be mainly self-interest."¹⁴ Provided he has Hume's account of the artificial virtues in mind Harman is right to stress the motive of self-interest but wrong to construe it as the moral motive. For Hume self-interest (that is, self-interest when not acting at its liberty) is the non-moral motive that his "undoubted maxim" requires; the moral motive, by contrast, is a mode of benevolence explicable in terms of sympathy and the pressures towards objectivity. David Norton's interpretation¹⁵ stands in interesting contrast to Harman's. Norton rightly stresses the importance of benevolence in Hume's theory of justice but mistakenly takes it to be the non-moral motive upon which distinctly moral motivation supervenes.

Granted that Hume acknowledges distinctly moral motivation in the contexts both of the natural and of the artificial virtues, does he make the presence of such motives a condition on virtuous action? It is tempting to think Hume would reject

this more-or-less Kantian proposal. It may be thought that his "undoubted maxim" requires him to do so. But consider. His doing so would (on an assumption defended earlier) commit Hume to the possibility of an agent's being virtuous while having no tendency to assess relevant actions or agents from an objective standpoint, and while being subject to idiosyncrasies, inconsistencies, and vagaries in the strength and scope of his ostensibly virtuous motives. It is better, I think, to allow Hume to introduce a notion of levels of virtue and to require the presence of distinctly moral motivation as a condition on virtue of some higher level. "[N]ot only virtue," he says, "must be approv'd of, but also the sense of virtue" (T 619). He could also, of course, insist that virtue (or virtue of a more demanding sort) requires the presence of a natural (i.e., a non-moral) as well as a distinctly moral motive. Recall a passage cited earlier: "A strong inclination may prompt him to the performance: A sentiment of order and moral obligation joins its force to these natural ties: And the whole man, if truly virtuous, is drawn to his duty, without any effort or endeavour" (NHR 89). The situation of the parent moved only by a sense of duty, not by natural affection for his children, could intelligibly be construed as second best.

The case of the artificial virtues raises a special problem, one recommending the view that, for them at any rate, it is only insofar as an agent is moved by distinctly moral motives that he is a virtuous man. A form of restrained self-interest is the natural motive on which the virtue of justice depends. Hume maintains, as he must, that such motivation in fact has consequences of which a moral spectator must approve: as Hume tells the story such

motivation serves in fact, though not in intent, the interests of all those affected. "This system [justice], ... comprehending the interest of each individual, is of course advantageous to the public; tho' it be not intended for that purpose by the inventors" (T 529). It is, however, surely open to question whether his self-interested motivation, though beneficial to the public, reveals an agent as virtuous. One moved to just acts by the impartial benevolence that constitutes moral motivation is, by contrast, surely so.

I have taken seriously Hume's claim to have "laid the foundation" of his moral theory in his theory of the passions. I have focussed on desire and not, as Ardal does, on the indirect passions of pride and humility, love and hatred.¹⁶ In doing so I have set, without having settled, an important interpretive question, that of the integration of the perspectives of both agent and spectator. I have touched on a number of questions about the relations between Hume's theory of motivation and his psychological characterization of the various virtues, including both virtues that are themselves motivational and those that are not. I have indicated, without adequately exploring, Hume's account of the joint roles of sympathy and of the pressures towards objectivity in the generation of moral sentiment. In effect, if indirectly, I have erected hurdles in the way of recent proposals for cognitivist renderings of Hume's theory of morals. I have also offered suggestions towards the interpretation of Hume's widely misunderstood argument concerning moral sense and the influencing motives of the will, and of his terribly obscure but allegedly "convincing" (T 477) argument for the artificiality of justice.

These concluding remarks, as also the body of the paper, are by way of an argument that his moral psychology is the key to Hume's theory of morals.

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1. All page references within parentheses in the text are to David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature [T], ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd edition with text revised by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford 1978); to his Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals [E], ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd edition with text revised by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford 1975); to his The Natural History of Religion [NHR], ed. A. Wayne Colver (Oxford 1976); or to his An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature [A], ed. J.M. Keynes and P. Sraffa (Cambridge 1938). Unless otherwise indicated, all italics within quotations are Hume's.
 2. Páll S. Ardal, Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise (Edinburgh 1966).
 3. See "Hume's Volitions" in Vincent Hope (ed.), Philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment (Edinburgh 1984) 70-90, and "Locke, Hume and the Nature of Volitions," Hume Studies, 1985 Supplement, 15-51. Compare Michael Smith, "The Humean Theory of Motivation," Mind 96 (1987) 36-61.
 4. It can also be misleading to do so if one takes a practical syllogism to represent practical reasoning rather than the structure of an action explanation.

5. In the second Enquiry Hume helpfully distinguishes two types of benevolence. "Particular" benevolence is that which (interpreting Hume) I have made dependent on love; "general" benevolence can, via sympathy, encompass strangers (E 298n). See Note 13, below.
6. As made, Hume's distinction of calm and violent desires presupposes his construing desires not as dispositions but as occurrences.
7. Donald Davidson, "How Is Weakness of the Will Possible?" in Essays on Actions and Events (Oxford 1980) 21-42.
8. Frequently, but not uniformly, when Hume characterizes the objective standpoint of morality his language calls the perspective of moral spectators to mind. One theme of the present paper is that the characterization must apply to the agent's perspective as well.
9. For Hume's views about the scope of agency see "Locke, Hume, and the Nature of Volitions," already cited, and my "Hume, Freedom to Act, and Personal Evaluation," History of Philosophy Quarterly, forthcoming.
10. On this point compare Gilbert Harman, Moral Agent and Impartial Spectator (The Lindley Lecture, University of Kansas, 1986).
11. In giving "moral obligation" I follow the editions of 1772 and 1777. Colver's text of The Natural History of Religion gives "moral beauty," following earlier editions. My attention was drawn to this passage by David Norton's "Hume, Atheism, and the Autonomy of Morals," in Marcus Hester (ed.), Hume's Philosophy of Religions (Winston-Salem: Wake Forest University Press, 1986), where the passage is quoted in footnote 41. (Norton gives "moral obligation," not "moral beauty.")
12. By "virtuous motive" Hume here means such a motive as generosity or parental affection. In the terminology I have introduced the motive is, though virtuous, a non-moral one, for it is (and this is part of Hume's point here) not a distinctly moral one.
13. For the purposes of Hume's argument concerning justice "interest" includes Humean "limited

generosity," or benevolence towards those one loves. Thus it is that Hume can write -- in a passage that suggests many of the points for which I argue in the body of my paper -- of the need to distinguish "betwixt the extensive sympathy, on which our sentiments of virtue depend, and that limited generosity ... which justice and property suppose" (T 586). See Note 5, above.

14. Harman, 8.
15. In his symposium contribution, "Hume's Moral Psychology: Motives and Artificial Virtues."
16. As should be plain, my reading of Hume on moral evaluations is complementary to Ardal's account, not an alternative to it.