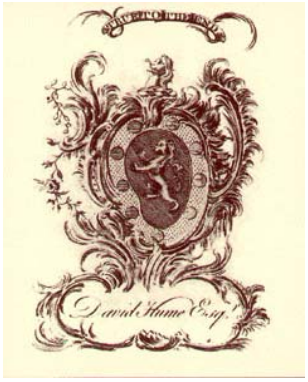

Hume and Davidson on Pride
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In reading the *Treatise* one has to be alive to the fact that Hume gives certain crucial words new meanings. He does not always draw the reader's attention to this and sometimes explicitly claims to be using terms with their ordinary meanings when he is clearly giving the words special technical uses by expanding or contracting their usual meanings. "Passion," "love," "hatred," "pride," and "humility" have special meanings in Hume's psychological scheme. He also sometimes uses important terms with more than one meaning, as in the case of "justice." The word "justice" both is the title of Book 3, Part 2 of the *Treatise*, which deals with a number of artificial virtues, and also refers to the much narrower concept of the respect for property. The following two questions should be borne in mind: "What did Hume have to say about what **he** calls justice, passion, love, etc.?" and "What did Hume have to say about what **we** refer to by the same terms?" Thus, Books 2 and 3 of the *Treatise* may be described as attempting to show how unbiased evaluations are possible, in spite of the fact that our passions are naturally biased and judgments of virtue and vice are passions. This clearly involves a discussion of how we can do justice to our own and other peoples' qualities of mind or character. Hume, therefore, had something very important to say about what we call justice, but his contribution to issues involving what we call justice today is obscured by his terminology.

In what follows I shall be claiming that Hume's account of pride throws light upon what **we** call pride although he clearly was not aiming to do so.

Donald Davidson, in a footnote to "Hume's Cognitive Theory of Pride,"[1] points out that there is a close similarity between his reading of Hume on pride and my own treatment of pride in *Passion and Value*.[2] Since the two accounts were arrived at completely independently, each of us can see the other's interpretation as some confirmation of his own. The accounts are not identical, however, and without aiming at a comprehensive comparison, I shall attempt to decide whether one or two of the apparent differences between our accounts indicate substantial disagreement.

I shall try not to confuse the following four questions: "What did Hume think constitutes pride?" "What lesson do I, and what lesson does Davidson think one could learn from Hume's account?" and finally, "What constitutes pride?" Davidson and I agree that a lesson is to be

learned from Hume's account, but disagree about the nature of this lesson because of a disagreement about the nature of pride.

Both Davidson and I think that Hume's claim that pride is a simple impression is an embarrassment to him. It does not have any immediate appeal and also leads him to clearly misrepresent the relation between pride and its object. Pride has self as its object in the sense that it is a form of self-evaluation. Hume misrepresents this relation as a causal relation between pride and the thought of oneself. Whenever one is proud, one's thought is drawn to oneself, but according to Hume it could have been otherwise. It just so happens that the feeling of pride makes one think of oneself, that when you are already proud your thought turns to yourself. Hume, it is true, does not always represent the relation between the object of pride and the passion itself as contingent. Much of what he says suggests the more plausible view that pride is **essentially** a form of self-evaluation, but the lesson we can learn from Hume we can learn in spite of his atomism, so let us follow Davidson and disregard the atomism, while admitting its presence in Hume's account.

Davidson points out that the pride Hume is talking about is pride for a reason. I follow Hume in talking about the cause of pride, or what makes one proud, but the two accounts seem to me to be very similar on this issue. The two accounts are also in agreement that Hume should have said that the proud person must see the cause of pride as having value rather than as an independent source of pleasure, but we are, I believe, in substantial disagreement about the relation of the cause of pride to the object of pride.

Hume introduces the concept of the subject of pride because he thinks the cause of pride need not be a characteristic of the proud person, the object of the passion. When a person is proud of his ancestors because of their culture, his ancestors are the subject, but the object is the pround person. When one is proud of some quality, then object and subject coincide. This distinction between the object and subject of a passion is a good feature of Hume's account, but Davidson clearly disagrees, for he translates Hume's talk of being proud of something or other into being proud that one has a certain quality. One is proud one has a beautiful house, and it is the fact that you value beauty that makes you proud. You may have strange values and, if you take pride in something that most people are ashamed of, you could **be proud** of it, although you would lack one good reason for **displaying** your pride. The fact that other people think you ought to be ashamed of your emotions, feelings or thoughts gives you a reason for hiding rather than expressing them.

Davidson claims that a person may be proud of his ugly house, and I draw attention to the fact that there is an important difference

between the reasons for displaying pride and the reasons for being proud. Here, it seems to me that each of us could accept the other's contention with advantage. You can be proud of your ugly house, but if you claim that you are proud of it because it is ugly, you should be prepared to explain what gives ugliness positive value in this context. In most cases "I am proud of my ugly house" would be taken to mean "I am proud of my ugly house, although it is ugly" rather than "I am proud of my ugly house **because** it is ugly." To be proud **of** something because it is ugly needs special explanation. If your house is believed to be so ugly as to have curiosity value, you could both be proud of it and have a reason for showing off about it.

Perhaps the most significant agreement between myself and Davidson is the contention that pride is an evaluation. My interpretation of Hume on judgments of virtue depends upon viewing judgments of virtue as love or hatred, pride or humility, when these emotions are caused by qualities of mind or character. Hume is not attempting an analysis of pride as we know it; his four important indirect passions are four basic ways of valuing people. Pride is to Hume a favourable evaluation of oneself for a reason. Davidson writes: "Self-approval, self-esteem, self-applause constitute pride."[3] This is followed by "Hume equates approbation with a judgment of merit,"[4] and finally, we read that "the self-approbation that is pride may ... be expressed by a judgment that one is praiseworthy."[5]

Davidson does not endorse Hume's use of the word "pride" which seems to him "not to correspond to any use the word has in English."[6] Thus, it is possible that he would not agree with the relation between pride and praiseworthiness that he attributes to Hume. But Davidson does not explain what that pride is that Hume helps us to understand, if it is not an emotion for which there is the name "pride" in English. However, I must take issue with Hume's analysis of pride as Davidson presents it, although one should not expect of Hume an analysis of an ordinary concept of pride. Hume is not primarily seeking to throw light upon the nature of pride for a reason as we usually conceive of it. The passions of love, hatred, pride, and humility are, when caused by qualities of mind or character, the four basic ways of evaluating people.

It is important to bear in mind that the three of us, Hume, Davidson, and myself, were tackling somewhat different problems. Hume was aiming at a general analysis of virtue and vice as founded upon passions; I am interpreting Hume's account of the indirect passions and assessing its adequacy; and Davidson is aiming at a more limited objective and confines his attention almost entirely to pride. He shows himself to be aware of the fact that a propositional form, comparable to "being proud that x," must for the sake of consistency be found for love, hatred, and humility. However, it seems somewhat more

unnatural to talk about "loving and hating that x" than "being proud that x."

I can explain why Hume had a special view about the nature of pride, required by his theory of the passions, but, since Davidson does not try to fit Hume's account of pride into his general theory of judgments of virtue, he needs to give some other reason why Hume should have had a special concept of pride not to be found thus named in English.

Something appears to have gone seriously wrong when Hume tells us that a quality that makes us love another person is a cause for pride when it belongs to oneself. Benevolence and kindness are clearly most lovable qualities, but one does not expect a person endowed with these virtues to be proud of possessing them. Although one would not want to say that the kind person has no right to be proud, it seems almost improper to take pride in the possession of these qualities of character. Although one might want to grant the benevolent person this right, it seems out of character for him to be proud of his benevolence. Perhaps the reason for our feelings is the impropriety of displaying pride in one's benevolence. (I shall say more of this soon.)

Hume thinks proper pride an essential feature of a man of honour. Proper pride is among those virtues we call heroic. Hume writes:

> *In general we may observe, that whatever we call* ***heroic virtue****, and admire under the character of greatness and elevation of mind, is either nothing but a steady and well-establish'd pride and self-esteem, or partakes largely of that passion. Courage, intrepidity, ambition, love of glory, magnanimity, and all the other shining virtues of that kind, have plainly a strong mixture of self-esteem in them, and derive a great part of their merit from that origin.*[7]

Hume goes on to explain that an undue show of vanity is condemned largely because it arouses in others the disagreeable emotion of humility. This emotion, involving as it does low self-esteem, is enervating, whereas pride is invigorating. Hume clearly disagrees with the Christian teaching that humility is a virtue, although he chooses not to mount a direct attack on this teaching of the Christian faith. There are other meritorious qualities than heroic virtue; of these Hume lists ***generosity, humanity, compassion, gratitude, friendship, fidelity, zeal, disinterestedness, liberality*** (T 603). The social virtues are essential for bringing out the useful aspects of the heroic qualities that otherwise might become socially injurious. Without the social virtues *Courage and ambition*, he says, *are fit only to make a tyrant and public robber* (T 604). Hume may have been eager to show

that it is, at least in part, the false Christian idea that humility is always a virtue that prevents us from seeing that proper pride is in order when a person has any virtue to be proud of.

Davidson thinks the logic of pride is a syllogism. "All who own a beautiful house are praiseworthy. I own a beautiful house, therefore I am praiseworthy." He thinks the conclusion should be that "I am estimable as the owner of a beautiful house." To be proud that one owns a beautiful house does not make one generally praiseworthy or estimable, for one may, as Davidson points out, have bought the house with embezzled money. "All that I can conclude is that I am meritorious in that I own a beautiful house."[10] Davidson also points out that Hume presumes that pride has two objects, the cause of pride and the person who is proud. This really means that there are two objects evaluated in pride, the proud person and the cause of pride. I learn from Hume the lesson that to be proud is to believe that the cause of pride is valuable, and that it is either a characteristic of the proud person or of something that is specially related to him/her. But the pride may be challenged, either on the ground that the subject that is supposed to be valuable does not in fact have the value it is believed to have, or because the proud person is mistaken in thinking that the subject is in a special way related to him. Unless the proud person can meet these two challenges, he has not justified his pride. To be proud is to believe that some quality you possess or something specially related to you is valuable, whereas to be justifiably proud both these beliefs must be well grounded.

There is a distinction to be drawn within the class of pride. This is reflected in the difference between being proud of oneself because of the possession of some characteristic, and being proud of something closely related to oneself. To be proud of the Canadian hockey team is to consider the team praiseworthy, whereas to be proud of oneself is to consider oneself praiseworthy. Hume's concept of the subject of pride helps to highlight this difference. The valuable characteristic that makes one proud is only sometimes a quality of the object of pride, the proud person himself. It is only when the quality belongs to the proud person that being proud seems to involve considering oneself praiseworthy. One may be proud of one's parents, ancestors, or country without claiming to be entitled to praise. The behavioural characteristic of boastfulness may accompany both. If Canadians are proud of their hockey team they are liable to display this pride by boasting about it, and a person who is proud of himself tends to boast of the characteristic that makes him proud. It is perhaps not out of place to mention in this connection that good breeding prohibits boastfulness even when one is justifiably proud. This is because boasting tends to be unpleasant to others who will be presented as lowered in value

because of the contrast with the qualities that occasion the boasting. The need to control boastfulness in the interest of good breeding is stressed by Hume in Book 3 of the *Treatise*.

I hope to have made it clear that when people are proud of other things than themselves, they cannot claim to be praiseworthy as an aspect of their pride. This is clear in the formulation Davidson prefers, for when I claim to be proud that the Canadian team beat the Russians at hockey, I am taking the team to be praiseworthy, whereas praise would be due to me only if I contributed to the success of the Canadian team.

Hume claims that the passions are simple impressions and therefore indefinable. This suggests that the passions are feelings that occur on specific occasions. Paradigmatic pride would be the feeling you have on a special occasion, such as the feeling you may have of your chest swelling with pride on being introduced to the Queen, or witnessing a trophy being presented to a member of your family, or on the occasion of hearing about some achievement of a fellow countryman. But most of what Hume says about the passions under discussion suggests that one does not cease to be proud simply because the feeling of pride is absent. A person is proud of his house although he may not be thinking about it at a particular time. If pride is an emotion, one may feel that dispositional pride must involve a disposition to have special feelings of pride. However, there is a difficulty about this suggestion, for a person's behaviour may clearly reveal his pride, although he may not be aware of this. It is debatable whether dispositional pride is an emotion, but this complex problem cannot be tackled in this paper.

I have already mentioned that pride is one form of self-evaluation, yet does not necessarily involve thinking that one is praiseworthy. It is one of the merits of Hume's account that he draws our attention to the great variety of ways in which our emotions evaluate; thus love and hatred may be the core concepts, but there is a difference between kinds of love according to a difference in their cause. The pleasant experience that causes love of music is different in kind from the qualities that lead one to love good wine. Respect is a special kind of love and contempt a special kind of hatred; one involves looking up to a person, the other looking down upon someone. Hume uses the term pleasure very widely and he specially draws our attention to this. Thus, love is pleasant, as is pride, whereas hatred and humility are unpleasant.

Pride as an evaluation of the proud person is an evaluation of a kind that is quite different from the judgment that one is praiseworthy. One can legitimately claim to be proud of a related subject, although one had neither a hand in realizing the valuable cause nor a close relation to the cause, the two joint causes of pride.

Is it not fundamentally irrational, however, to allow people to claim any kind of increase in value from a situation that does not involve any praiseworthy characteristic being possessed by the proud person? What constitutes a reason for pride differs from the reasons that justify praise. The proud person in some way acquires positive value by association with something valuable; some of the value of the cause is allowed to rub off upon the object of pride, the proud person. I shall now suggest situations in which allowing pride in the absence of earned praise may seem to be desirable and to be encouraged. When Iceland gained complete independence from long colonial rule in the forties, the initial move towards independence took the form of young poets awakening the self-awareness of the people by inspiring pride in not only the cultural heritage of the country, but also the beauty of the scenery. As individuals, the citizens were not entitled to think of themselves as praiseworthy, although they were expected to gain in self-esteem from seeing themselves as specially related to something of value. Somehow, they were entitled to some of the value of the subject to which they were related without themselves having earned praise. They were entitled to be proud, they had nothing to be ashamed of, and they could hold their heads high. Pride is invigorating and may lead to praiseworthy activities; however, the value is allowed to rub off on the proud person prior to it being earned. Thus, the conditions for thinking oneself to be justly proud are different from the conditions for thinking oneself to be praiseworthy. It follows that thinking oneself to be praiseworthy is not part of what it is to be proud.

I have been drawing attention to the beliefs that partly constitute pride and that Hume wrongly thinks of as causal conditions for the creation of a simple impression which constitutes the pride. Does this mean that there is no characteristic feeling associated with the occasional occurrence of pride? I think there is such a feeling or a range of feelings, although pride cannot be identified by these feelings isolated from the beliefs the proud person must have to be proud. One can see that there are feelings characteristic of pride by noting that it would be absurd to say that one feels depressed when one's chest sweels with pride; it clearly feels more like being elated or pleased. Thus, there is an answer to the question "What does it feel like to be proud?" though beliefs as well as feelings are part of the nature of pride.

The lesson I learned from Hume is different from Davidson's reading. I believe that the reason for this is that I pay explicit attention to the complexity of the question, and this helps to reveal that pride is a different kind of evaluation from considering oneself to be praiseworthy. Pride, Hume rightly sees, is an invigorating emotion that tends to strengthen self-reliance and prevent bullying. Self-worth and self-reliance are necessary to promote decisive action. Pride may have many

causes, but when it is caused by qualities of mind or character, pride is a judgment of virtue.

Hume's emphasis upon the passions helps us to see the great variety of ways in which our life is coloured by emotions. Belief, he thinks, is more akin to the sensitive than to the cognitive side of our nature. The world into which we are born is a world of people in ever shifting emotional relations. Hume's claim that the minds of men are mirrors to each other, and his description of emotional reverberations makes it intelligible why fundamental moral judgments are always assessments of persons. We come to know the world by attempting to fend for ourselves by the developing of habits that contribute to our survival and successful agency.

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1. Donald Davidson, "Hume's Cognitive Theory of Pride," *Journal of Philosophy* 75 (1978); reprinted in *Actions and Events* (Oxford, 1980), 277-90.
2. Páll S. Árdal, *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise* (Edinburgh, 1966), chap. 2.
3. Davidson (above, n. 1), 285.
4. Davidson, 285.
5. Davidson, 285.
6. Davidson, 278.
7. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford, 1965), 599-600. Further references ("T") will be given in parentheses within the body of the text.
8. Davidson (above, n. 1), 285.