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Daniel E. Flage

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# Hume's Hobbism and His Anti-Hobbism

*Daniel E. Flage*

Thomas Hobbes posed a *crise morale* to which British philosophers attempted to reply for over a century.<sup>1</sup> Hobbes maintained that the terms 'good' and 'evil' have no import beyond individual self-interest and the fulfilment or failure to fulfil one's desires.<sup>2</sup> While alluding to laws of nature known by reason,<sup>3</sup> whether one deems such laws dictates of prudence<sup>4</sup> or laws of some moral import,<sup>5</sup> Hobbes held: (1) that the notion of justice arises only after the institution of a commonwealth, and (2) that the dictates of justice are merely the dictates of the sovereign.<sup>6</sup> Hence, justice is strictly a matter of convention.

In this paper I argue that the Hume of the *Treatise* was a mitigated Hobbist.<sup>7</sup> Like Hobbes, Hume held that the notions of justice and obligation rest on a set of conventional social rules. Hume distinguished himself from Hobbes primarily with respect to questions of moral value, and though he provided an account of moral obligation, this was secondary to his considerations of moral value. To establish this, I briefly examine the 'is'-'ought' paragraph before turning to Hume's discussions of obligation and value.

## 1. 'Is' and 'Ought'

To understand the 'is'-'ought' paragraph, one must consider it in the context of *Treatise* 3.1.1. There Hume examines the source of one's knowledge of moral value, namely, "*Whether 'tis by means of our ideas or impressions we distinguish betwixt vice and virtue, and pronounce an action blameable or praise-worthy?*"<sup>8</sup> Hume's discussion, however, moves rather freely between considerations of moral value ('good' and 'evil', 'virtue' and 'vice') and considerations of moral obligation ('right' and 'wrong'). Even in the 'is'-'ought' paragraph, a paragraph that seems to be concerned with purported relations between questions of fact and questions of moral obligation, Hume explicitly alludes to value claims at the end of the paragraph (T 470). Since a moral philosopher might make any one of three claims regarding the relations between value and obligation, namely, (a) value claims are primary and obligation claims are dependent on them;<sup>9</sup> (b) obligation claims are primary and value claims are dependent upon them;<sup>10</sup> or (c) there are independent grounds for claims of value and obligation, I argue that Hume was attempting to dispel position (b). If this is correct, then Hume's

arguments both pave the way for a conventionalist theory of obligation and undercut Hobbes's rationalistic account of natural law.<sup>11</sup>

Hume's discussion in *Treatise* 1.1.1 is a critique of moral rationalism. It consists of two types of arguments. First, there is an argument from motivation that since moral qualities influence the passions, but what is known by reason does not influence the passions, moral qualities are not known by reason (T 458-63). Second, there is a series of arguments to show that moral qualities cannot be known by reason. In examining some of the latter discussions, we shall see how in rejecting a rationalistic ground for moral obligation, Hume also undercuts any rationalistic ground for claims of moral value.<sup>12</sup>

Remember, Hume's question was "*Whether 'tis by means of our ideas or impressions we distinguish betwixt vice and virtue, and pronounce an action blameable or praise-worthy?*" (T 456). The rationalists answered this question in terms of ideas, claiming,

that there are eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses of things, which are the same to every rational being that considers them; that the immutable measures of right and wrong impose an obligation, not only on human creatures, but also on the Deity himself: All these systems concur in the opinion, that morality, like truth, is discern'd merely by ideas, and by their juxta-position and comparison. (T 456-57)

In this, his initial account of the rationalists' position, Hume seems to focus on moral obligation, rather than moral value: the alleged eternal fitnesses seem to be moral rules such as, "All cases of wilful murder are wrong," rather than rules such as, "All cases of wilful murder are vicious (evil)." If it were possible to establish that a rule of moral obligation is true, a moralist might accept an additional putatively self-evident bridge-principle that, "Any action that is right (wrong) is virtuous (vicious)," and thereby deduce a claim of moral value from a claim of moral obligation. If behind Hume's criticism of the rationalist's theory of obligation lay a concern with this bridge-principle, this explains why Hume focuses on rationalistic theories of moral obligation, while his stated concern is with moral value.

Were there but one case in which Hume prefaced his considerations of moral value with considerations of moral obligation, there would be little reason to suggest that he was concerned with such a bridge-principle. But even a cursory examination of *Treatise* 3.1.1 shows that the obligation-to-value shift is prevalent throughout his discussion of the rationalists. It is found when Hume raises the question of the evidence for the rationalists' position:

If the thought and understanding were alone capable of fixing the boundaries of right and wrong, the character of virtuous and vicious either must lie in some relations of objects, or must be a matter of fact, which is discovered by our reasoning. (T 463)

When Hume focuses on the relationship between reason and the will, he again suggests that if a rationalistic claim of obligation is unwarranted, there is no ground for a claim of value. He begins:

In order, therefore, to prove, that the measures of right and wrong are eternal laws, *obligatory* on every rational mind, 'tis not sufficient to shew the relations upon which they are founded: We must also point out the connexion betwixt the relation and the will; and must prove that this connexion is so necessary, that in every well-disposed mind, it must take place and have its influence; tho' the difference betwixt these minds be in other respects immense and infinite. (T 465, Hume's emphasis)

While the grounds for his critique of a rationalistic ethic apply with equal force to a theory of value or a theory of obligation, Hume regularly introduces considerations that purportedly concern the epistemic status of moral value claims by considering the epistemic status of moral obligation claims. I take this as evidence that Hume was concerned not only with the epistemic status of primary moral principles, but also with the epistemic status of a bridge-principle between claims of moral obligation and moral value.

If I am correct, this explains the shift in the 'is'-*'ought'* paragraph from considerations of moral obligation (*'ought'*-claims) to considerations of moral value. The paragraph reads:

I cannot forbear adding to these reasonings an observation, which may, perhaps, be found of some importance. In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this *ought*, or *ought not*, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be

observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it. But as authors do not commonly use this precaution, I shall presume to recommend it to the readers; and am persuaded, that this small attention wou'd subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceiv'd by reason. (T 469-70)

Hume begins by considering the relationship between claims of fact and claims of *moral* obligation, 'ought'-claims. It is impossible, as a simple matter of deductive logic, to deduce a claim of obligation from a factual claim. If a deduction could be made, presumably there would need to be a rule of moral obligation that tied a particular factual claim, for example, "Act *x* is an act of wilful murder," to a claim of moral obligation, "Act *x* is wrong (an act in which one ought not engage)." A premise such as, "All acts of wilful murder are wrong," would "observe" the distinction between fact and moral obligation and allow one to deduce a singular claim of moral obligation from a singular factual claim, thereby "explaining" why the predicate of moral obligation is applicable to a particular action. Since Hume had argued throughout the section that claims of moral obligation cannot be known by reason (on the basis of relations of ideas), there is no rational basis for the deduction. But notice how Hume concludes: "the distinction of *vice and virtue* is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceiv'd by reason" (T 470, emphasis added). Here Hume is concerned with claims of moral value. If there is no basis for claiming moral obligation on the basis of reason alone, one cannot apply the bridge-principle that, "Any action that is right (wrong) is virtuous (vicious)": there is no rationalistic basis for claims of moral value.<sup>13</sup>

Consider the implications of such a position: (1) If rules of moral obligation cannot be known on the basis of reason, the traditional basis for natural law theory is undercut. Hence, if one allows that the reason or understanding can discover natural laws, such laws have no moral content: they are merely factual statements specifying the best means to an end.<sup>14</sup> (2) Since moral laws cannot be known by reason, virtue and vice are distinguished on the basis of impressions rather than ideas. But since Hume indicated that one can never sensibly observe the viciousness in an acknowledgedly vicious action such as wilful murder—"You never can find it, till you turn your reflexion into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action" (T 468-69)—the impression providing the basis for a claim of viciousness is an impression of reflection.<sup>15</sup> (3) Since

moral laws cannot be known by reason, one cannot know a bridge-principle such as, "All actions that are virtuous (vicious) are right (wrong)," by reason. Hence, even if one knew that an action had a certain moral value, one cannot infer that one is morally obligated to engage in, or to refrain from engaging in, such an action. (4) Since the moral sentiment provides one solely with grounds for distinctions of moral value, not moral obligation,<sup>16</sup> and since there are no bridge-principles that allow one to infer obligation from value, Hume has paved the way for a conventionalist theory of *non*-moral obligation.

## 2. Justice and Obligation: Hume's Hobbism

According to Hobbes, there is no justice apart from a commonwealth that has the power to institute and enforce positive law. The rules of justice are strictly conventional; they are identical with the positive laws instituted. The warrant for these rules is self-interest: individuals form a commonwealth to avoid the disadvantages of a state of nature, and, in transferring all one's rights to the sovereign save the right to preserve one's own life, one agrees to follow the laws promulgated by the sovereign on pain of punishment.

While Hume is famous for rejecting the myth that a state of nature and the formation of a commonwealth are antecedent to the institution of societal rules (T 492-95), he is at one with Hobbes in contending that justice is an artificial virtue and that the rules of justice and obligation are strictly conventional (T 494ff.). Further, just as an Hobbesian individual would deem it in his or her self-interest to institute a commonwealth and follow its laws, so Hume held that self-interest is the motive that leads to the formation of societal laws. To see that there are these similarities between Hobbes and Hume *vis-à-vis* the genesis of justice, let us examine "Of the origin of justice and property."

Having argued in *Treatise* 3.2.1 that justice is an artificial virtue, that the original motive for justice can be neither a sense of morality (T 477-79) nor a sense of public interest (T 479-93), Hume begins *Treatise* 3.2.2 by asking how "*the rules of justice are establish'd by the artifice of men*" (T 484). His explanation of the origin of justice focuses on the "unnatural conjunction of infirmity, and of necessity" (T 485) in human beings *vis-à-vis* other animals. " 'Tis by society alone 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" (T 485). Society operates in accordance with rules. How are these rules formed?

Unlike the Hobbesian individual in a state of nature, who recognizes that it is in his or her own rational self-interest to establish the central authority of a commonwealth,<sup>17</sup> Hume holds that the natural attraction among members of opposing sexes is sufficient to explain the origin of a minimal society, namely, a family (T 486). While

this differentiates the origin of society and the foundations of justice, it alone does not explain the origin of the rules of justice. Hume explains the latter in terms of "the enjoyment of such possessions as we have acquir'd by our industry and good fortune" (T 487), that is, he ties justice explicitly to the origin of property.

Human beings naturally show a primary partiality to themselves and only a secondary partiality to their families and acquaintances (T 488). It is a combination of self-interest and a recognition of the ease with which external possessions can be transferred that gives rise to the conventional rules of justice. Hume writes:

when they have observ'd, that the principal disturbance in society arises from those goods, which we call external, and from their looseness and easy transition from one person to another; they must seek for a remedy, by putting these goods, as far as possible, on the same footing with the fix'd and constant advantages of the mind and body. This can be done after no other manner, than by a convention enter'd into by all the members of the society to bestow stability on the possession of those external goods, and leave every one in the peaceable enjoyment of what he may acquire by his fortune and industry. By this means, every one knows what he may safely possess; and the passions are restrain'd in their partial and contradictory motions. Nor is such a restraint contrary to these passions; for if so, it cou'd never be enter'd into, nor maintain'd; but it is only contrary to their heedless and impetuous movement. Instead of departing from our own interest, or from that of our nearest friends, by abstaining from the possessions of others, we cannot better consult both these interests, than by such a convention; because it is by that means we maintain society, which is so necessary to their well-being and subsistence, as well as to our own. (T 489)

There are two points to notice in this passage. First, rules governing possessions are purely conventional.<sup>18</sup> Second, these rules arise naturally from the recognition that the best means to fulfil one's own interests, that is, retaining one's possessions, is by adopting a rule that each acknowledge that everyone should be allowed to retain his or her possessions. It is in the establishment of a conventional rule governing possessions that justice has its origin:

After this convention, concerning abstinence from the possessions of others, is enter'd into, and every one has acquir'd a stability in his possessions, there immediately arise

the ideas of justice and injustice; as also those of *property*, *right*, and *obligation*. The latter are altogether unintelligible without first understanding the former. Our property is nothing but those goods, whose constant possession is establish'd by the laws of society; that is, by the laws of justice. (T 490-91)

Here Hume's Hobbism should be apparent. First, the notion of justice, and similarly those of right, property, and obligation, are subsequent to the establishment of a set of conventional rules.<sup>19</sup> Second, as Hume stresses at numerous points, the primary natural motive to justice—the motive from which the conventional rules defining which actions are just or right derive their origin—is self-interest.<sup>20</sup> Yet, unlike Hobbes, Hume allowed that self-interest is not the sole motive for engaging in just acts: one develops a “sense of justice” (T 496), a “sentiment of right and wrong” (T 498). With respect to any given set of conventional rules, the development of a “sense of justice” is a function of education (T 496-98): presumably, by repetition and enforcement the rules become internalized. But since moral obligation is something more than merely following conventional societal rules, we must ask how Hume introduces *moral* obligation into his system.

### 3. The Moral Sentiment: Hume's Anti-Hobbism

Up to this point I have argued that Hume's discussion in *Treatise* 3.1.1 paved the way for introducing a conventionalist theory of obligation. I have also shown that, for Hume, the natural motive that yields a system of conventional rules of justice is primarily self-interest. It remains to look at Hume's remarks on the moral sentiment and the grounds for distinguishing artificial (conventional) obligations from moral obligations.

Hobbes's use of 'good' was univocal: an action or state of affairs is 'good' if it is the object of one's desires, if it is something the attainment of which is taken to be in one's best interest.<sup>21</sup> Hume, while seeming to identify good with pleasure, and evil with pain (see T 276, 399, 439), maintains that there are distinct kinds of pleasure and pain, and it is on the basis of one's awareness of one kind of pleasure or pain that he distinguishes moral good and evil from the non-moral senses of those terms. To see this, let us begin by examining Hume's initial discussion of the moral sentiment.

In the course of his discussion of the moral rationalists, Hume asked whether the virtue or vice of an action is a matter of fact. So long as one examines an object one deems vicious, for example, an act of

wilful murder, one finds nothing that is vicious. But in looking at the object, one is looking in the wrong place. As Hume writes:

You never can find it, till you turn your reflection into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action. Here is a matter of fact; but 'tis the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object. So that when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it. Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compar'd to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which, according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind: And this discovery in morals, like that other in physics, is to be regarded as a considerable advancement of the speculative sciences; tho', like that too, it has little or no influence on practice. (T 468-69)

Recall that the object of discussion in *Treatise* 3.1.1 is the grounds for distinguishing between vice and virtue (T 456). Here that question is answered: they are distinguished by the moral sentiment. If 'is vicious' and 'is virtuous' are predicates of moral *value*—and our discussion of the artificiality of justice indicates that they cannot be primarily predicates of moral obligation—then Hume has provided a means of deeming a state of affairs<sup>22</sup> morally good that is independent of one's self-interest. Notice also that the analogy to secondary qualities *suggests* that the moral sentiment judges the vice or virtue of *particular* states of affairs, a point Hume's further discussion tends to confirm.

In turning to the question, "Of what nature are these impressions, and after what manner do they operate upon us?" (T 470), Hume answers, "Here we cannot remain long in suspense, but must pronounce the impression *arising from virtue*, to be agreeable, and that *proceeding from vice* to be uneasy" (T 470, emphasis added). Hume's words suggest, as Norton has noted, that the virtue or vice of a state of affairs is identical with the causal basis for a sentiment of pleasure or pain, a point that is in keeping with the analogy to secondary qualities.<sup>23</sup> As he continues, Hume is insistent that there is a particular kind of pleasure that is peculiar to the moral sentiment. He writes:

Now since the distinguishing impressions, by which moral good or evil is known, are nothing but *particular* pains or pleasures; it follows, that in all enquiries concerning these moral distinctions, it will be sufficient to shew the principles, which make us feel a satisfaction or uneasiness from the

survey of any character, in order to satisfy us why the character is laudable or blameable. An action, or sentiment, or character is virtuous or vicious; why? because its view causes a pleasure or uneasiness *of a particular kind* [emphasis added]. ... To have the sense of virtue, is nothing but to *feel* a satisfaction *of a particular kind* [emphasis added] from the contemplation of a character. The very *feeling* constitutes our praise or admiration. ... We do not infer a character to be virtuous, because it pleases: But in feeling that it pleases *after such a particular manner* [emphasis added], we in effect feel that it is virtuous. The case is the same as in our judgments concerning all kinds of beauty, and tastes, and sensations. Our approbation is imply'd in the immediate pleasure they convey to us. (T 471)

Again, "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, Hume's emphasis; see also T 473). It is a particular kind of pleasure or pain that arises from (is caused by) a morally virtuous or vicious state of affairs, and Hume's remark that, " '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" (T 472), is sufficient to show that self-interest plays no role in determining moral good and evil.

But what does one judge in judging moral value? Is it an action or something else? Hume's answer is that it is the motive that causes an action that is one's object of praise or blame. He writes:

'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 and temper. The external performance has no merit. We must look within to find the moral quality. This we cannot do directly; and therefore fix our attention on actions, as on external signs. But these actions are still considered as signs; and the ultimate object of our praise and approbation is the motive, that produc'd them. (T 477; see also T 478)

It is the motive, the passion, that causes a particular action that is the primary object of moral appraisal. An action derives its moral value from the motive that is its cause (T 479).

Although one is directly aware of the passion that causes one's own actions, one must engage in a factual inquiry to determine the passion that is the motive for the action of another: a certain kind of action is

a sign, but not a conclusive sign, of a particular kind of motive. As Hume indicates, it is the particular motive of a particular action that is the object of moral judgment. Notice what he writes:

After the same manner, when we require any action, or blame a person for not performing it, we always suppose, that one *in that situation* shou'd be influenc'd by the proper motive of that action, and we esteem it vicious in him to be regardless of it. If we find, upon enquiry, that the virtuous motive was still powerful over his breast, tho' check'd in its operation by some circumstances unknown to us, we retract our blame, and have the same esteem for him, as if he had actually perform'd the action, which we require of him. (T 477-78, emphasis added)

There are several things to notice here. First, one always judges the motive that causes a particular action within the situation in which it is operative. Second, the action itself is taken as a sign of the motive, although it is not a conclusive sign: if one is acting under constraint, the motive for one's action might be quite different from what one would infer from the action itself. Third, since there is not a constant conjunction between a kind of action and the motive that is its cause, to assess the moral value of an action requires that one inquire into the circumstances in which the action is performed: it is only on the basis of such a factual inquiry that one can determine what the actual motive was and its value *vis-à-vis* the circumstances.<sup>24</sup>

In summary, to evaluate the moral value of the motive that produces a particular action, one must engage in a factual inquiry concerning the circumstances in which an action occurs in an attempt to discover the actual motive. One's inquiry must be "disinterested" insofar as one disregards all advantages to oneself, and, under those circumstances, one must notice whether one is aware of that kind of pleasure or pain which is peculiar to the moral sentiment. This inquiry requires the mechanism of sympathy, which allows one to empathetically place oneself in the position of the agent. If I am correct, all evaluations of moral value pertain to particular motives for particular actions.<sup>25</sup>

If Hume distinguishes himself from Hobbes *vis-à-vis* moral value, does he similarly distinguish himself from Hobbes *vis-à-vis* moral obligation? I believe he does, but the degree of difference here is far less.

Recall that Hume held that the constitutive rules of justice are conventional. As conventional rules, they can, and do, differ from society to society.<sup>26</sup> While Hume allows that anyone in a civilized society has a "sense of justice," this "sense of justice and injustice is not

deriv'd from nature, but arises artificially, tho' necessarily from education, and human conventions" (T 483). Insofar as the "sense of justice" arises from education, that is, it reflects the internalization of a *particular set* of conventional rules, it is an artificial moral sense. Nonetheless, it is this "sense of justice" that provides the *moral* character of an obligation and allows one to distinguish moral rights and duties from, for example, the duties of etiquette.

But the primary moral predicate attributable to an action is a value predicate, and the value of an action is strictly dependent upon the motive of the actor (T 477); whether or not one is morally justified or morally obligated to engage in an action of a certain kind tells one little if anything about the moral value of the action. Because Hume drew a distinction between the grounds for claiming moral obligation and the grounds for claiming that an action has moral value, he could consistently suggest that when a miser requires the repayment of a debt, he or she has acted justly, but, insofar as the motive for the miser's action is greed, the act is not morally good or praiseworthy (T 497). It is this distinction that allows Hume to suggest that Marcus Brutus was a moral hero, insofar as his motives were "public Spirit and Magnanimity,"<sup>27</sup> even though his assassination of Caesar was certainly unjust, that is, contrary to the laws of society.

Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest that Hume was a mitigated Hobbist. Like Hobbes, he held that the laws defining justice are strictly conventional and based fundamentally on the motive of self-interest. A set of conventional rules become rules of moral obligation when one develops a "sense of justice" with respect to that set of rules. Unlike Hobbes, however, he held that the moral sentiment provides the basis for distinguishing between morally good and evil motives. It is through a consideration of the moral value of one's motives for an action in a particular set of circumstances that one determines whether that action is morally virtuous or vicious.<sup>28</sup>

*James Madison University*

1. See David Fate Norton, *David Hume: Common-Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician* (Princeton, 1982), 11-13, 21ff.; and L. A. Selby-Bigge, ed., *British Moralists* (Oxford, 1897; Indianapolis, 1964), xxxiii-xcii.
2. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1968), pt. 1, chap. 6, p. 120; Thomas Hobbes, *Human Nature*, chap. 7, sec. 3, in *British Moralists 1650-1800*, ed. D. D. Raphael, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1969), 1:4-5; Thomas

- Hobbes, *De homine*, chap. 11, sec. 5, in *Man and Citizen*, ed. Bernard Gert (Indianapolis, 1991), 47-48.
3. *Leviathan* 1.14-15, pp. 189-217; Thomas Hobbes, *De cive*, chaps. 2-3, in *Man and Citizen*, 135-52.
  4. See Frederick Copleston, *Modern Philosophy: The British Philosophers*, vol. 5 of *A History of Philosophy* (Garden City, New York, 1964), pt. 1, p. 44.
  5. See Richard Peters, *Hobbes* (Baltimore, 1956), 170-73; and J. Kemp, *Ethical Naturalism*, *New Studies in Ethics* (New York, 1970), 17-25. Hobbes seems to suggest that natural laws have moral import insofar as they are divine commands. See *De cive*, chap. 4, in *Man and Citizen*, 153-63.
  6. *Leviathan* 1.13, p. 188; 1.15, p. 202.
  7. I leave open the question whether the Hume of the second *Enquiry* held the same position.
  8. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2d ed., rev., ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1987), 456 (hereafter cited as "T").
  9. Utilitarians hold such a position. See also Panayot Butchvarov, *Skepticism in Ethics* (Bloomington, 1989), 137-95.
  10. Kant seems to have been such a one.
  11. This assumes that Hobbesian natural law has some normative moral content. See Peters (above, n. 5), 170-73; and Kemp (above, n. 5), 17-25.
  12. While my discussion concerns the latter question, one should notice that there is a similar shift between questions of moral value and moral obligation in the motivational argument. See T 460 and 462n.
  13. If my account of the implicit bridge-principle between obligation-claims and value-claims is correct, it explains why Hume held that value-claims, and only value-claims, are warranted on the basis of a moral sentiment. My interpretation avoids potential criticisms, such as Mackie's, that "even a dispositionally descriptive statement [a statement describing the dispositions of the moral sentiment] is undeniably an is-statement, a statement of fact about causal tendencies, and, if a typical moral statement is to be understood in this way, then it will be an ought-statement which follows in the directest possible manner from an is-statement, namely by sameness of meaning." J. L. Mackie, *Hume's Moral Theory* (London, 1980), 69.
  14. Since Hobbes held that "A Law Of Nature (*lex naturalis*) is a Precept, or generall Rule, found by Reason" (*Leviathan*, 1.14, p. 189), Hume's discussion implies that such laws can have no moral content. *À la* Hume, they can be nothing more than general

statements showing the best means to a certain end; for example, advancing one's own interest or explaining necessary conditions for the survival of human beings (see T 501-26). If a purely prudential understanding of Hobbesian natural law is correct, then Hume's critique of the moral rationalists is an element of his Hobbism.

15. I return to considerations of the moral sentiment in section 3 of this paper.
16. Should anyone question this, see Hume's discussion of moral parsimony at T 473.
17. *Leviathan* 1.17, pp. 227-28.
18. Remember, Hume uses the term "possessions" to distinguish those objects in one's physical control, however one might have obtained them, from property properly so called. Property comes into existence only with the establishment of a set of conventional rules. While Hume rejected the myth of a state of nature, his discussion assumes that one can intelligibly consider a period before which there were societal rules.
19. One should notice that while *most* duties and obligations are a product of convention, there is a limited number of duties that are "natural." These "natural duties" rest upon one's natural passions. As Hume notes, "where an action is not requir'd by any natural passion, it cannot be requir'd by any natural obligation; since it may be omitted without proving any defect or imperfection in the mind and temper, and consequently without any vice" (T 518). One's "natural obligations" are presumably limited to "duties to oneself" and duties of familial care (see T 478).
20. Hume's allusions to "common interest" at T 490 concern nothing more than mutual self-interest. At T 492 Hume notes that it is only self-interest that restrains one to the rules of society: "For whether the passion of self-interest be esteemed vicious or virtuous, 'tis all a case; since itself alone restrains it: So that if it be virtuous, men become social by their virtue; if vicious, their vice has the same effect." Indeed, one of Hume's primary objectives in *Treatise* 3.2.2 was to establish "*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). See also T 494, 499, 529, 533, 543-44.
21. See *Leviathan* 1.6, pp. 120-21.
22. I use "state of affairs" here and in the subsequent paragraph to refer ambiguously to an action or the motive that causes it. We shall see below that Hume maintains that motives are the primary objects of moral value judgments.

23. See Norton (above, n. 1), 112-14. Further evidence for this might be drawn from *Treatise* 2.1.7, where Hume claims, "The very essence of virtue, according to this hypothesis, is to *produce* pleasure, and that of vice to *give* pain" (T 296, emphasis added). See also T 472.
24. Hume provides a fairly detailed account of the conditions in which one evaluates the moral value of a motive in the first appendix of the second *Enquiry*. See David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3d ed., rev., ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1975), 290 (hereafter cited as "E").
25. I have discussed the evaluation of moral value in greater detail in "Hume's Ethics," *Philosophical Topics* 13 (1985): 71-80. On Hume's account of sympathy, see Annette C. Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise* (Cambridge, 1991), 148-51.
26. Should there be any question of this, see the dialogue appended to the second *Enquiry* (E 324-43).
27. David Hume, *The Letters of David Hume*, ed. J. Y. T. Greig, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1932), 1:35. See also T 582; E 180-81, 328-29.
28. I wish to thank Richard Lippke for his helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.