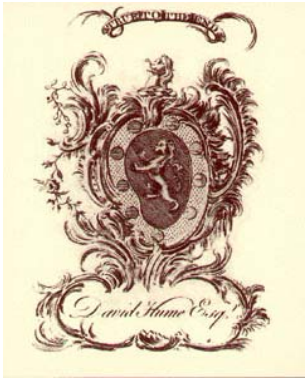

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Hume on the Mezzanine Level

SIMON BLACKBURN

I. Groundwork

Those who like to compare moral qualities to secondary qualities have occasionally claimed Hume as an ally. In this paper I want to explore the complex territory that the comparison with secondary qualities—hereafter, the Comparison—opens up. My primary aim is to show not only that Hume did not rely upon the Comparison in his theory of ethics, but that he could not possibly have done so, for reasons lying deep within his philosophy. I have, indeed, an agenda of my own here. Hume has equally been claimed as an ally of the kind of expressivist theory of ethics that I myself endorse. But the 'secondary quality' reading challenges this alliance. If Hume is firm on the Comparison, and if he has an entirely non-expressivist story about secondary qualities, then he seems to be theorizing in quite a different way, and any expressivist appropriation of him will be unjustified.

Seeing Hume as impressed by the Comparison has at first sight good textual backing. The most famous direct passage is in *Treatise* III i 1:

> Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compared 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; though, like that too, it has little or no influence on practice. Nothing can be more real, or

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> concern us more, than our own sentiments of pleasure and uneasiness; and if these be favourable to virtue, and unfavourable to vice, no more can be requisite to the regulation of our conduct and behaviour. (T 469)

Hume directly returns to the Comparison only once more. A very similar statement occurs in a footnote to the *Essay*, "The Sceptic":

> Were I not afraid of appearing too philosophical, I should remind my reader of that famous doctrine, supposed to be fully proved in modern times, "That tastes and colours, and all other sensible qualities, lie not in the bodies, but merely in the senses." The case is the same with beauty and deformity, virtue and vice. This doctrine, however, takes off no more from the reality of the latter qualities, than from that of the former; nor need it give any umbrage either to critics or moralists. Though colours were allowed to lie only in the eye, would dyers or painters ever be less regarded or esteemed?[1]

It is quite clear that he is tapping into the familiar list of secondary qualities: tastes, colours, sounds, heat, and cold, although by what principle things get onto that list remains undiscussed. It is at first sight equally clear that he draws a consequence from qualities being on that list, namely that they become "not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind" or they "lie in the senses."

Notice, however, that while Hume is prepared to tolerate the inference, he does not himself present it with any great enthusiasm. It is only "supposed to be fully proved in modern times" or "according to modern philosophy" that secondary qualities lie in the senses. I am not suggesting that Hume dissociates himself from the modern philosophy at this point. Rather, the tone is one of distaste for the issue, especially visible in the way he introduces the discussion in the second passage, and the place it has in a footnote. Hume is maintaining a cautious distance from the modern philosophy, and we shall see that he has good reason to do so.

Each passage then goes on to reassure the reader that their place in the mind does not detract from the "reality" of the properties, and this reassurance is clearly the main purpose of introducing the comparison. We are not to think that because virtue and vice are "in the mind" they cease being "real," and the point of saying that is to keep afloat the enterprises of criticism and moralizing. Now once we see the passages as having this as their point, the extent to which Hume is actually interested in the Comparison becomes moot. He is not at all saying: "here is my full dress theory of virtue and vice: they are secondary properties," but rather, "you might be worried whether my full dress theory of virtue and vice, which places them in the mind,

undermines enterprises of criticism and morality. But it does not do so, any more than the similar discovery about secondary qualities does." For the purpose of reassuring his readers, he needs only a weak comparison, building on the one point of analogy that virtue and vice are in the mind, just as much as colours and the rest. He is merely using the analogy to make a local point.

This is, of course, consistent with the sparseness of further direct textual evidence. For it is notable that apart from these two passages Hume never talks directly of the Comparison. There are indirect allusions to it in other places, but it is significant that in the second *Enquiry*, for example, he never mentions it. It is also significant that the phrase 'moral sense', which would be the correlative of the sense of sight, touch, hearing or taste, occurs only twice in the whole corpus: once in the title of III i 2, and once more in a very glancing fashion in III iii 1. It is simply not a theoretical term with which Hume *does* anything, and its prominence as a section title is, I think, misleading (it is partly piety to Hutcheson and partly a slogan, a counterpoise to the preceding title, "Moral distinctions not derived from reason"). Yet a worked parallel between a moral sense and the ordinary senses would clearly be central for any theory of ethics relying on the Comparison.

There are, of course, more detailed disanalogies between colours, tastes, sounds, and felt temperatures, which are the immediate deliverances of the senses, and virtue and vice, which are not. One difference is that the primary object of moral judgement, for Hume, is the character of an agent, and this character is not laid before us as the bearer of sensible properties. It is a construct from occasions of acting, thoughts about likely motivation, efforts at discounting for personal involvement with the subject, and so on. In modern terms we might say that it is a theoretical entity, or possibly a logical construction, and could not be the presenter of a sensible quality, like a sound or a taste. You can no more see or hear the character of Brutus, or of your friend, than you can taste the intentions of the United Nations. You have to judge the character in the light of a historical record. But you cannot judge the colour of a thing in the light of any record at all, unless relying on a fortuitous empirical correlation between the colour and something else. For Hume himself, a major difference will be the element of ratiocination that comes with taking up the general point of view, and correcting the sentiments that self-love might immediately provoke. It might indeed be suggested that this process is sufficiently like correcting an estimate of colour made in what is known to be bad light, for the Comparison to survive it. But there are crucial differences. In the latter case we have only a judgement about what we would perceive were the light different. We do not have another colour perception alongside whatever we are seeing at the time. Whereas in the ethical case, we do have a genuinely moral sentiment emerging from the process, another original existence to put alongside whatever initial sentiment self-love generated.

Why might Hume have had reason to put a question mark by the modern philosophy? The answer is clearly his distaste for any primary/secondary quality distinction. The most succinct statement is in the first *Enquiry*, Section XII:

> There is another sceptical topic of a like nature, derived from the most profound philosophy; which might merit our attention, were it requisite to dive so deep, in order to discover arguments and reasonings, which can so little serve to any serious purpose. It is universally allowed by modern enquirers, that all the sensible qualities of objects, such as hard, soft, hot, cold, white, black, &c. are merely secondary, and exist not in the objects themselves, but are perceptions of the mind, without any external archetype or model, which they represent. If this be allowed, with regard to secondary qualities, it must also follow, with regard to the supposed primary qualities of extension and solidity; nor can the latter be any more entitled to that denomination than the former. The idea of extension is entirely acquired from the senses of sight and feeling; and if all the qualities, perceived by the senses, be in the mind, not in the object, the same conclusion must reach the idea of extension, which is wholly dependent on the sensible ideas or the ideas of secondary qualities. Nothing can save us from this conclusion, but the asserting, that the ideas of those primary qualities are attained by Abstraction; an opinion, which, if we examine it accurately, we shall find to be unintelligible, and even absurd. An extension, that is neither tangible nor visible, cannot possibly be conceived: And a tangible or visible extension, which is neither hard nor soft, black nor white, is equally beyond the reach of human conception. (ECHU 154–155)

This is an abbreviation of the attack on Locke in I iv 4 ("Of the modern philosophy") of the *Treatise*. In each treatment Hume is mainly concerned to destroy any kind of reliance on the primary/secondary distinction as a bulwark against scepticism. His argument is, of course, straight out of Berkeley, as he acknowledges, although adding the famous backhanded remark that it is one of those arguments that admit of no answer and produce no conviction. Once more it ought to strike us that there is not much enthusiasm for the discussion; the passage comes only as a kind of afterthought to Hume's own discussion of scepticism, just as the section "Of the modern philosophy" follows the weighty "Of scepticism with regard to the senses." By the time of the *Enquiry*, the introductory sentence shows the tone in which Hume wearily supposes he has to raise the topic (compare also the first sentence of the passage from "The Sceptic," quoted above). He certainly does nothing, here or elsewhere, to suggest that secondary qualities form an interesting category for

him on their own. They are only another source of difficulty for a common-sense theory of our relationship to the external world.

It is clear from this alone that if Hume were to compare virtue and vice to *secondary* qualities, he would have to go on and simply compare them to *sensible* qualities, for there is no division that interests him within that category. But then someone might conjecture that since causal necessity is given, in Hume, a strikingly similar treatment to moral qualities, it too would become a sensible quality or relation between objects. But *this* comparison is surely completely untrue to Hume. The whole need for a theory, in each case, arises from the fact that we do not simply sense either moral or causal qualities.

What now of the indirect evidence that he relies on the Comparison? Perhaps the most obvious is the famous metaphor that I and others have highlighted as expressivist in tendency: that whereas reason "discovers objects as they really stand in nature, without addition or diminution," taste "has a productive faculty, and gilding or staining all natural objects with the colours, borrowed from internal sentiment, raises in a manner a new creation." Whether or not this is a good metaphor for an expressivist to seize on, it certainly implicates secondary qualities. So it can, with equal or greater propriety, be used by defenders of the Comparison.

The metaphor of colouring can evidently be taken in two stages. Staying outside philosophy, we imagine a literal gilder or stainer, plying his worthy trade of producing and changing colours. But this is not a particularly apt metaphor for the critic or moralist. Parents and schoolteachers who form character may literally produce virtue and vice by their effects on the characters of their pupils. But the ordinary judge of virtue and vice does no such causing *qua* judge: it is not the critic who produces the beauty of the painting. Continuing the comparison further, we might pedantically notice that staining is slightly more apt than gilding but that both are problematic. By gilding something you cover up its former colour, which may remain ready to be uncovered again, whereas by staining you create a new colour. But even in staining you start with something of one colour and *alter* it to another. Colour is not created *ex nihilo*, or out of non-coloured ingredients, and Hume of course cannot say that it is, because like Berkeley he believes that we cannot conceive of bodies as without colour.

Now it may be that the comparison of the productive power of taste with the productive power of the gilder and stainer is sufficiently casual for these disanalogies not to be troublesome. But it is surely more likely that Hume intends us to go further and exploit the philosophy of perception with which he is involved: we must imagine all colours as a kind of projection from the inner visual field.[2] Gilding and staining is, in that sense, something that we all do all the time, and it is this comparison that the second stage of the metaphor has to exploit, although by doing so Hume is taking us onto ground

that is, by his own lights, extremely treacherous. For he is in no position to *endorse* the projection of colour perceptions onto an external reality. If in colour vision we raise "in a manner" a new creation, the manner is just the one that is subject to the devastating hostility of *Treatise* I iv 2 and 4, and of the follow-up in *Enquiry* Section XII. Hume constantly warns us against "supposing" what we cannot really conceive, namely an external independent reality with qualities "resembling" our perceptions. This supposition has nothing to be said for it, and if it is in a like manner that we erect a world of vice and virtue, the Comparison works to the detriment of the latter. This, indeed, confronts us with the whole seventeenth and eighteenth century perplexity with both primary and secondary qualities, which we now turn to explore. But it in any case suggests that we have to be careful in supposing that Hume has worked his metaphor right through, to provide a weighty statement of his final embrace of the Comparison. If secondary qualities are a kind of blot on the perceptual scene, they will not be ready models for the Hume who is such an enthusiast for the judgements of virtue and vice.[3]

The upshot of this section is twofold. First, there is no direct evidence that Hume wished to use the Comparison in his theorizing about value. And second, there is a distinct obstacle to his doing so, namely that instead of affording a working model for an epistemology of value, the Comparison threatens to drag it down into the same problems that dog Hume, and his predecessors, and that result in their failure to give any epistemology of sensible qualities themselves. I shall illustrate how serious this second problem is in the next section, before turning to see whether we can do better.

II. Secondary Qualities

In their recent treatment of physicalist theories of colour, Boghossian and Velleman say that the dispute between color realists and their opponents is one about which properties colors are, and "in particular, whether colors are any of the properties in a particular set that is acknowledged on both sides to exhaust the properties of material objects."[4] The description of the dispute is useful, although it perhaps fails to acknowledge sufficiently that one thing an anti-realist about color might be doing is denying that color is a property at all. We have to make space for the comparison with pain, a felt sensation that may not present itself as apprehension of any property of an object.

In fact, we have to make space for the entire seventeenth and eighteenth century perplexity over how ideas ever represent the qualities of objects at all. It is useful at this point to remind ourselves of the famous statement of the non-representative nature of a passion:

> A passion is an original existence, or, if you will, modification of existence, and contains not any representative quality, which renders

> it a copy of any other existence or modification. When I am angry, I am actually possessed with the passion, and in that emotion have no more a reference to any other object, than when I am thirsty, or sick, or more than five foot high. It is impossible, therefore, that this passion can be opposed by, or be contradictory to truth and reason; since this contradiction consists in the disagreement of ideas, considered as copies, with those objects which they represent. (T 415)

But suppose we ask why Hume does not add the perception of an expanse of colour to being thirsty, or sick, as examples of possession of non-representative states? It is only by a pre-Lockean (let alone pre-Berkeleyan) illusion, according to Hume, that such a state could be thought of as possession of a putative copy of an object. If this is what it is to be a representative state, then even a small amount of philosophy teaches us that colour vision yields no representative states, but only "original existences." The way Hume avoids this consequence is highly significant. For Hume representation is not primarily a "horizontal" relationship between internal states (perceptions) and external objects. It is a "vertical" relationship in time, between an idea and a preceding impression, and the relation is that of being a copy.[5] Hume could with profit have exploited the distinction found in Sextus Empiricus, between "recollective signs" which are internal relationships between ideas, and perfectly legitimate, and "indicative signs" which are ideas taken as indicating the nature of reality, which are not legitimate. There is no particular problem about imagined *qualia* copying impressed *qualia*; the difficulty is about *qualia* representing anything else. Eventually the difficulty is about any indicative relationship at all, but it is with secondary qualities that the problem first strikes.

We can now see more clearly why sensible qualities are an entirely useless model for Hume. For the problem in the case of ethics is how a passion, an original existence, becomes transmuted into a judgement of the properties of things. It is *not* the "vertical" problem of how an imagined or remembered passion can resemble an occurrent passion. Yet this is all that the Comparison could give Hume. If we wish to understand how the transmutation from passion to judgement takes place, we cannot rely on a model whereby *qualia* or perceptions become judgements, true or false, about the colour of objects. For Hume, as for Berkeley, a perception can resemble nothing but a perception: representation remains entirely vertical, or in Sextus's terms, recollective. We have, therefore, no model at all in secondary properties for the crucial transition in the case of judgements of value. All the Comparison could do would be to point us in an entirely delusive direction, inviting us to imagine a scene which we would immediately have to reject, in which we take our own mental modification (the passion) as a kind of copy of the same things existing independently of us, as if things gave us pleasure, made us angry or indignant,

by being themselves full of pleasure, or angry or indignant. Here, then, is another reason why Hume could not have used the Comparison as a useful component of his theory of ethics.

The foil to Hume's treatment, as Berkeley's, is Locke's belief that in some cases we can properly postulate a double existence—an idea in us and a quality resembling it in objects—whilst in other cases we cannot.[6] In the cases where we cannot, it does not go without saying that we are dealing with a property (a quality possessed by something) at all.[7] Now much recent writing has reminded us that Locke's problem with secondary qualities was widespread both before and after he wrote, shared at least by writers from Descartes to Kant.[8] In her recent survey, Margaret Wilson further notes that:

> also common to most of these writers is a tendency to vacillate, just as Locke does, over whether terms like 'color' and 'red' denominate physical structures, or the "powers" that (partly) result from the structures to cause sensations, or (as Locke seems usually to suppose) the sensations themselves.[9]

So let us distinguish three positions or families of positions:

1. Colours are microphysical structures (possibly including relationships with other things of certain structures).
2. Colours are the powers or dispositions that objects have, in virtue of their microphysical structures, to cause sensations in us.
3. Colours are sensations (*qualia*) in us.

It might seem fairly shocking that a philosopher could vacillate over which of these to endorse, and I am not sure which philosophers, except Locke, Margaret Wilson has in mind. Malebranche and Arnauld seem to me to come down unambiguously for the third option, and even in Locke the weight of his writing points fairly firmly towards the second option. There is surely no vacillation in Berkeley's commitment to the third approach (Berkeley is, in every sense of the word, single-minded), although Hume, as we have seen, keeps a slight distance between himself and the "considerable advancement of the speculative sciences." Meanwhile the interesting thing is that elsewhere Hume is indeed prey to the corresponding vacillation. Everyone will recognize the parallel trio for virtues:

1. They are useful or agreeable qualities in persons, such as frugality and assiduity.
2. They are the powers that persons have, through possessing such qualities, to excite pleasures and passions in us who contemplate them.
3. They are pleasures and passions that lie in the mind of the observer.

We might with advantage juxtapose another vacillation. Everyone knows the two definitions of cause:

> an object, followed by another, and where all the objects, similar to the first, are followed by objects similar to the second. Or, in other words, where, if the first object had not been, the second never had existed. The appearance of a cause always conveys the mind, by a customary transition, to the idea of the effect. Of this also we have experience. We may, therefore, suitably to this experience, form another definition of cause; and call it, an object followed by another, and whose appearance always conveys the thought to that other.[10]

Generations have cut their philosophical teeth on pointing out that the first "philosophical" definition is not equivalent to the second "natural" definition. Here I just want to point out that it is the same set of options that is in play. On the one hand we have what is there in nature, insofar as we can understand it: the regular succession of "objects" or events. On the other hand we have these impinging on the mind, and what the mind makes of it. So we have the same three elements:

1. A regular succession of events.
2. The power of such a succession to alter the mind, so that the idea of one event conveys the thought of the other.
3. The purely mental change, or habit of mind itself, of one who "makes no scruple" of foretelling one event from another.[11]

If we insist that Hume must come clean, and tell us what causes are, he may seem evasive.[12] My suggestion is that if there is an evasion, Hume thinks it is one that we have to make, both here and in ethics, for the same reason in each case.[13] How could this be so? Well, suppose we take seriously his self-image as a philosopher, of bringing the Newtonian method into the study of the mind. Then the central quarry is not an ontological, scientific sounding description of "what color is," or "what causes are," but what we are doing when we think of the world in terms of colors and causes (if there is an investigation into what virtue is, it is because philosophy involves itself in first-order ethics). The central explanandum, in other words, is our activity of moralizing, or causalizing, or colourizing, that is, our propensity to moral, causal, and chromatic interpretation of the world. Now for the purposes of giving such an explanation the three-fold picture was *itself* a considerable discovery. First there are the objects of nature, not themselves conceived in moral, causal, or chromatic terms. Our minds are such that these have the power to excite various ideas or passions or habits of expectation; these are themselves purely mental modifications, and bear no resemblance to the properties of the things that excite them. What we have, in this discovery, is an alternative to a descriptive or representative account, and given the infirmities with representation-as-copying this is exactly what is needed. So far so good. But it is a central weakness of Hume's writing on all three topics that

he does not explore what a theory of the truth or falsity of remarks with this non-representative parentage could look like.

But there is a motive for his silence. Suppose we insist that he *has* to confront the choice that so exercises us—how can his evasion be principled? And why then is he that much less confident than Berkeley that the third option is unambiguously right? Why is there the defensive tone about the recent advance in the speculative sciences?

The answer to this lies at the end of Book I of the *Treatise*. There he confronts the fact that he takes himself to have established that, faced with the problem of our representation of the external world, the understanding "entirely subverts itself," leaving us only a choice between "false reason and none at all."[14] This is a consequence of the breakdown of any tenable view of the indicative nature of sensible qualities (not just those that are secondary). Nature, of course, takes us away from the "deepest darkness" into which this melancholy reflection plunges us, and Hume goes off to dine and play backgammon. But he then returns to the newly sober inquiry into the principles of moral good and evil that will occupy the next two Books. Now Hume knows himself at this point to be embarked on an inquiry that can only have strained relations with the deep reflections of Book I. It would be nice had it turned out otherwise, but it has not. He has now to occupy a room somewhere between the study and its melancholy and the dining room with its indolence, and this is where the rest of the inquiry is situated. Naturally he wants his moral and political writing to reach an audience, so we have to imagine a mezzanine level, with its face cheerfully towards the dining room, and its back turned to the muffled groans of melancholy coming up from the study.

In particular, then, he is embarked on an inquiry which will be extremely nervous about *pressing* the choice between (1), (2), and (3). That way lies only an unsustainable view about the relation between perceptions and the world: unsustainable because reason can only regret the incoherent mix of elements that common-sense manages to hold together by the simple expedient of carelessness and inattention. Hume is therefore absolutely not in any position to give a "theory" of moral judgement that *owes* anything to his or Berkeley's view of sensible qualities. That is just the way towards scepticism and inconsistency. He needs to be delicate about bringing in reminders of what we think about colour and taste. This is why the comparisons are so seldom confronted, and then only in the incidental contexts I have described. The inquiry into moral judgement is to take place within the world to which nature and custom habituate us. Too much reflection on colour, sounds, and tastes begins the process that destabilizes that world, and is therefore, as the passage from Section XII of the *Enquiry* quoted above implies, absolutely out of order. Here we have the explanation of the defensive tone. It is more than mildly irritating when the guests in the dining room impolitely ask after the melancholy noises in the study. On the mezzanine level "philosophical

decisions are nothing but the reflections of common life, methodized and corrected": they gain nothing except the modest understanding of their own limitations from the unpleasant sojourn in the study.[15]

It will be even more irritating if the guests dabble in the issues that were exhaustively treated in the study. Anyone taking hold of the view that virtue lies in the mind, for example, might suppose he has learned a contrast with other properties of things. But the full-dress treatment in the study showed that the contrast evaporates when we explore other kinds of judgement. It is not that it is a false thing to say, but it is certainly taking us into areas best left alone. In particular, it is not that we have any useful point of contrast between primary and secondary qualities upon which to fall back, making the way secondary qualities or values lie in the mind particularly interesting. If someone insists on pressing the issue, it ought to be enough to let her listen to the noises coming up from the gloom below.

So my suggestion is that after the end of Book I of the *Treatise*, Hume has good reason for not wishing to press the questions of choice between (1), (2), and (3). It is not that he vacillates, although if one read only the moral theory one might well think so, but that he has ruled out the possibility of any further useful inquiry. And above all, it is not important to his real contribution to the understanding of ourselves as moral judges: the systematic reflection on everyday reasoning that faces entirely towards the dining room. Here then is the final reason why he cannot use the comparison with secondary qualities for serious purposes. It does not provide a chapter of philosophy on which he could draw with anything other than embarrassment.

The mezzanine level may seem not to be quite as comfortable a place to be as Hume would have us think. As many commentators have pointed out, the mitigated or worldly scepticism it allows has a normative element, both in the theory of morals and in that of belief formation, as when Hume criticizes people's propensities to believe in miracles. It is initially unclear that anyone emerging so battered and crestfallen from the study has any right to draw these limits and guidelines for belief. The reason he is consistent is that the battering was one-sided. As in Philo or Sextus Empiricus, it is the pretensions of reason that have been undermined. Once this is done, there is no obstacle to mocking its operations when it draws people to the factious, useless structures of divinity, school metaphysics, and fantastical ethical systems. It is Hume's Augustan ethics that provides his right to this stance, and to supposing that it is durable good that comes from maintaining it.

III. Can We Do Better?

Do we know enough about colours, tastes, sounds, and felt temperature to escape from Hume's despair, and to use them as useful models for moral judgement? Hume's reason for eschewing the Comparison will not be ours, if unlike him we can descend from the mezzanine and live in the study without

melancholy. Perhaps we have a better theory of secondary qualities, or a better theory of representation, or a better sense of the manifest image, or the world as it is for us, that can guide us to a stable position in which the Comparison plays a useful role.

Just to remind us that it is not going to be easy, we may put Kant himself into the picture:

> The taste of a wine does not belong to the objective determinations of the wine, not even if by the wine as an object we mean the wine as appearance, but to the special constitution of sense in the subject that tastes it. Colours are not properties of the bodies to the intuition of which they are attached, but only modifications of the sense of sight, which is affected in a certain manner by light.[16]

So the Copernican revolution does not enable us to understand how secondary qualities can be properties even of objects as they are for us.

I cannot possibly do justice to the variety of theories of colour that have been proposed in recent writing. But if we stay with the three kinds of claim, we can notice the characteristic difficulties of each. I take it as clear that what makes the philosophically distinctive problem about colour is the nature of "occurrent colour," or the *quale*, or phenomenal property, that each of us is directly aware of when we open our eyes in front of the Mediterranean sky, British pillar boxes, and so on (although I shall later suggest that there are difficulties in thinking of this as an occurrence). As we have seen, Boghossian and Velleman take it that the central question between colour realists and their opponents is over the location of this property in the physical world. What I propose to argue is that once we accept this description of the problem, theories centered on (1) and (2) are not so much false as missing the point, while we still have no theories centered on (3).

The first kind of theory makes the identification: colours are microphysical properties, or higher order properties based on these, such as the property of having one of some family of microphysical properties, although I hope the remarks I shall make apply to both kinds of theory. The colour blue on this view might be the disjunction of microphysical properties resulting in a thing (or volume, or expanse of space) being seen as blue. There is waning enthusiasm currently for this option for two reasons. First, we have come to realize what a remarkably heterogeneous class of things, from the point of view of the physicist, get to be seen as blue. Second, there is good reason not to remove us from the scene.

Compare the following case. Imagine a robotic chair detector, programmed to select chairs by attention to a variety of chair-like features, including such things as whether it can sit on the candidate without mechanical stress.[17] Making such a thing would be making a chair-classifier, but

there would be little reason to expect the physical properties chairs share to form a natural group independently of the fact that they elicit the classification. Whether a thing gets the verdict would, for instance, be a function of particular configurations of the stress monitors within the robot. A next-door robot might do just that bit differently. Taking the robots out of the picture, and thinking of the chairs as forming an independent "kind" seems quite unmotivated. The members of the kind cannot be thought of as sharing anything in common until we bring in the system that responds to them. Now our visual and other systems are one design amongst many that have learned to extract information from electromagnetic radiation; just which radiation in which patterns can no more sensibly be identified in the absence of reference to our systems than in the case of the chairs and the robots. We could put the point another way. It is not just that we ought to enlarge our vision to include the detecting system, for the reason given. The problem is also that what we want to understand in the first place is the judgement or experience of colour, and its way of representing the world. Even if a physically simple stimulus neatly corresponded with each colour, we would be no nearer to understanding this by flourishing the identity between colour and some property of the stimulus. In Fregean terms, we might have addressed the reference, but not the mode of presentation. But the problem with colour is entirely a problem about the mode of presentation.

Another way of coming to prefer this story to the simple identity with underlying physics is to reflect that over time colour vision could easily evolve so that more things or different things are blue, for example. Some environments might reward better a visual system in which the classification is elicited by things with more or fewer elements in the heterogeneous physical disjunction. But there would be little reason to say that blue—real, occurrent blue—is not what it was, or that what it represents to us (what is presented in this mode) is any different. Similarly when scientists make a new microphysical configuration that generates a colour, like a laser beam, they do not change what the colour is. We can bring us back in by making a higher order identification: redness is the property of having a property that makes people see-redly. I do not mind this, but it is as true (and in my view just as unilluminating) as a corresponding equation would be in the case of other reactions (funniness is the property of having a property that makes people amused, for instance).

Here we are nudged towards the second choice, a dispositional theory, according to which what things share is the property of eliciting a classification from the onlooker. Now the classic trouble with dispositional theories is that we do not see dispositions except indirectly, by seeing something else such as a sign of them, or a display of them. What we see has a monadic, occurrent quality. A disposition does not. Dispositions may indeed be observed. A disposition to poison people can be detected by sight. But it is a

question of seeing *that* the mushroom is poisonous and whenever this is so there seems to be a question *in virtue of what* that was seen, and the answer will be something like the lurid orange, or the pattern of red splotches, or even the way the people who ate it fell down. It is when a colour is perceived that any dispositions an object has are finally manifested or displayed or exercised. We know the object has the disposition *because* of the exercise, but it is in the exercise that the perception of colour occurs. Perceiving a colour is an occurrence standing to the disposition of an object as the occurrence of being poisoned stands to the poisonous disposition of the mushroom. A theory of colour centered on identifying colour with a disposition is going to be like a theory of poison that ignores poisonings. It is, again, not so much that what is said will be false, so much as that it is discussing Hamlet whilst ignoring the prince.

So what of the third choice, that the considerable advance in the speculative sciences has shown us that colours are in the mind's eye? The problem is that it is essential to our concept of colour that only spatial expanses (volumes, surfaces, areas of space) can be coloured. Seeing a surface or space as coloured is not to be thought of on the model of an inert, unintentional, inner occurrence (a sensation) and an inference, however natural and innate and immediate, to a corresponding property of some kind in the world. Colours are spatial, and in fact the metaphor of an inner theatre is exactly an attempt to accommodate this, by providing a separate inner expanse capable of being literally coloured whereas things in the external world are only called coloured by a displacement or projection. But how are we to understand a private mental expanse except on the model of a public one? The problem with the theory that Sydney Shoemaker calls "literal projectivism" is that there is no place in the private mental expanse for the literal colours which are then supposed to be displaced.[18] It is here that the concept of 'occurrent' colour may betray us: an occurrence is an event, and must take place *somewhere*—so we think, if not outside, then inside.

What we want instead is one place, and that outside, for colours, but recognition that only a change in the subjective view is the occurrent state that grounds colour attribution. This occurrent state is dependent on our own make-up, and that anything like it ever happens at all is entirely due to the exigencies of evolution. It is not, however, the existence of a private expanse, and not displaced wrongly when we place colours where they are. The temptation then is to get rid of the occurrence, and to make this change in view purely cognitive, a judgement of external colour. But we know in our bones that this will not do, for there is no contradiction in supposing a creature that sees the world as coloured without making judgements, or that makes the judgements (for instance, by having been told about colours) without sharing the view. We have to retain the experience and its "representative quality": it is the pillar box itself that is represented, and it is represented as *red*.

My own belief is that only a quite different mode of approach offers any hope. Understanding colour means understanding the subjective point of view and whilst our paradigm of what that would be conceives of it as an extra ("inner") region, all is lost. In the case of colour the problem is understanding the fusion of experience and judgement of an external object. In the case of ethics the problem is understanding the fusion of sentiment with similar judgement. But that problem is surely more tractable. It might even be promising to reverse the Comparison, and to wonder if we can use a projective theory of ethics as a model for understanding secondary quality attribution. If in ethics we have a going judgmental practice best understood as grounded on a non-representative state, can we modify the ingredients to make progress with colours and the rest? The essential point will be that the projective or expressivist theory of ethics has nothing to do with *displacement*—we have already seen that this idea will lead nowhere, either with ethics or with colour. We would be in the space of a non-literal projectivism, that wrestles a judgmental practice from a modification of ourselves that is, in the ethical case a pleasure or a passion, and in the secondary quality case a hearing, seeing, tasting, or touching.

The parallel is intriguing, I believe. But it is not in Hume, and it is not the promise for which the Comparison is usually desired. It reverses the order of explanation, and in doing so, of course, presupposes that we already have a working theory of value judgement. As I have already remarked, it is a flaw in Hume's writings that although he has so many of the ingredients for this to hand, he will not bring himself to revisit the study where they might be put together. But if we compare the progress that has been made in the theory of the meaning of value judgements since his time, versus the progress, if any, that has been made in the parallel theory of secondary quality judgements, we can see that were he to be prevailed upon to revisit the study, it ought to be to model the latter on the former rather than the other way round.

REFERENCES

1. David Hume, "The Sceptic," in *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, edited by E. F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1985), 166.

2. I use the locution that Hume is involved in this not to indicate that it is his own opinion, but that he relies on the reader to share the essential presupposition, namely that colours and the rest are in essence to be thought of as perceptions, lying in the mind.

3. The way in which empiricism fails to give a reasonable story about the relationship between perception (and other intentional states) and their objects is stressed by Barry Stroud in this volume. I do not differ from Stroud over this, but over supposing that the infirmities of that story are just the same as those of the story for virtue and necessity.

4. Paul Boghossian and David Velleman, "Physicalist Theories of Color," *Philosophical Review* (1991): 67–106.

5. E.g., *Treatise*, I i 1, 3. "The ideas I form are exact representations of the impressions I felt; nor is there any circumstance of the one, which is not to be found in the other. In running over my other perceptions, I find still the same resemblance and representation. Ideas and impressions appear always to correspond to each other." Also, "All ideas are derived from and represent impressions" (I iii 14, 160, and of course II iii 3, 415). David Fate Norton suggested to me that Hume may have relaxed this restriction on the range of 'represents', notably in II ii 5, 359, where "money" implies a kind of representation of "beautiful or agreeable" objects. But the mechanism involved seems to be straightforward association of ideas, rather than involving a genuinely distinct relation.

6. *Essay*, II viii 15.

7. The Idea/Quality distinction has been extensively documented by Peter Alexander, "The Names of Secondary Qualities," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 1977, and in *Ideas, Qualities and Corpuscles: Locke and Boyle on the External World* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985).

8. I would say, Democritus to Russell—and beyond.

9. Margaret D. Wilson, "History of Philosophy in Philosophy Today; and the Case of the Sensible Qualities," *Philosophical Review* (1992): 191–226.

10. *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section VII.

11. The phrase is from *Enquiry* Section IV, Part II. I would include in the habit of mind a propensity to conduct various kinds of counterfactual reasoning; Hume had no positivist illusion that there is a tremendous gap between this and everyday expectation.

12. Of course, he sometimes comes down unambiguously one way: that the customary transition is the same with the power and necessity (T 166), that the "connexion, tie or energy" lie merely in ourselves (266). But he also comes down unambiguously the other way, most famously in talking of the ultimate springs and principles governing nature, that are totally shut up from human curiosity (ECH 27).

13. It ought to be the same reason, given the strength of the case that Hume models his treatment of causation on what he took himself to have learned about ethics.

14. I iv 7, 268.

15. *Enquiry*, Section XII, Part III, 162.

16. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A28, B44.

17. I introduce this monster in "Losing Your Mind, Physics Identity and Folk Burglar Prevention," in Blackburn, *Essays in Quasi Realism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

18. It is interesting that there is no strictly parallel problem for sounds and tastes, whose location "in the mind" is to that extent less problematic.