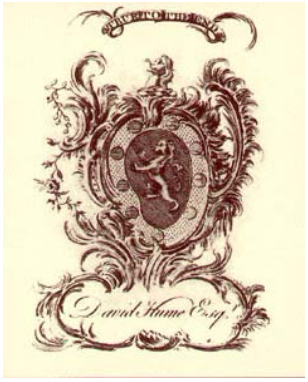

Virtue, Commerce, and Self-Love

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Hume Studies Volume XXI, Number 2 (November, 1995) 275-288.

HUME STUDIES
Volume XXI, Number 2, November 1995, pp. 275–287

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Can economic activity be virtuous? Can the pursuit of commerce and profits be moral? Both Hume and Adam Smith are agreed that Britain will live or die as a trading nation, and trade requires the harvesting or production of goods with which to trade. This in turn requires that people be motivated to harvest or to produce these goods, and neither Hume nor Smith give any evidence of believing that people are motivated by a general love of mankind, an extensive sympathy, or a broadly-encompassing benevolence to produce them. Indeed, quite the opposite appears to be the case: both writers think the pursuit of luxury, wealth, and the general riches of life have much more to do with the harvesting and production of goods for trade than does any widespread, general concern for the well-being of others. And this fact leads straightforwardly to the question I want to consider, namely, whether this kind of what I shall call economic motivation is compatible with moral motivation.[1]

In Smith, our question can be seen as leading to what is sometimes called the "Adam Smith problem" (which on another occasion I should want to argue is a pseudo-problem). *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* gives an account of moral motivation in which sympathy and/or benevolence plays an integral role, whereas in *The Wealth of Nations* self-love is very much to the fore. No remark in Smith is better-known than his statement of this latter position:

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> It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.[2]

Now it has sometimes been suggested that the way to solve this problem is to keep economics and ethics separate, to try to confine economic activity to a domain about which, in essence, we do not ask ethical questions. But to most of us this clearly will not do; the whole point is that we *do* want to ask ethical questions about economic activity. That is, in pursuing their trades, it must be possible for the butcher, brewer, and baker to be acting morally; otherwise, commerce and virtue will be incompatible, and in enjoining us to take up and to pursue the former vigorously Hume and Smith would be advocating immorality. Again, neither writer gives any evidence of taking himself to be advocating any such thing. It must be possible, then, for motivation by self-love to be moral, if a vibrant, prosperous nation is to result from and to propagate further commerce and trade. If the cost of morality is penury and a life of dreadful unhappiness, then while such a life may recommend itself to one consumed with the monkish virtues, it is far from clear that it would recommend itself to the rest of us.

I am interested here in Hume and in one possible way of construing his remarks on self-love in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*.[3] But first a few words on Mandeville are necessary, since it is he who sets the terms of the debate over the compatibility of moral and economic motivation.

In *The Fable of the Bees*,[4] Mandeville praises vice (or the pursuit of self-interest) in the cause of national prosperity and castigates virtue as threatening to undermine prosperity. Employing an egoistic account of man's passions and motivation, he argues that individual pursuit of self-interest or vice produces public benefits. Pride, avarice, and the pursuit of enjoyment, luxury, and the fine things of life create economic activity, jobs, and economic and social opportunities, and these in turn benefit society. His point is that growth of (i) mutually beneficial economic activity, (ii) increases in general prosperity and in public, material benefits, and (iii) increased general well-being and societal good do not require the assumption of cooperation among benevolently motivated individuals. Quite the opposite is the case: benevolence flows out of self-interest, in that the enhanced prosperity and well-being of others are the unintended by-products of everyone acting upon their own self-interest. (This, today, is sometimes held to be a "trickle down" theory of general prosperity.) In fact, virtue and commerce are incompatible: to give but one example, a virtuous society would undermine economic prosperity and the public good through failure to generate jobs, jobs which most definitely are created through individual quests for luxury and gain.

Smith, of course, knew the *Fable*, and it is not only those enamored of Mandeville and of market capitalism generally who find in that work intimations of some of the substantive positions of *The Wealth of Nations*.

We can carry Mandeville's general thinking to a further conclusion: not only are virtue and commerce incompatible, but it is also true that attempts to induce habits of mind or of action and traits of character appropriate to the former run the risk of helping to undermine the latter. In other words, the incompatibility that he points to runs to the very kind of practices and conventions that we should seek to devise or generate by which to regulate our behavior. Practices and conventions appropriate to keeping us upon the straight and narrow may well be inappropriate to facilitating commerce and prosperity and so the public good.

It cannot be denied—indeed, the literature is replete with examples— that one might try to evade Mandeville's case (and what I take to be a version of it in *The Wealth of Nations*) by trying to forge distinctions among self-love, enlightened self-love, self-interest, enlightened self-interest, selfishness, moderate selfishness, and so on. But all such attempts, *at the level of motivation*, seem always to come up short; for whatever the niceties of one's distinctions, the brute fact remains that individuals in the marketplace, unless one simply stipulates that they are motivated by concern for others, can enhance the general prosperity and so the material conditions of others without any such concern. To try to build such a concern into an enlightened self-love or self-interest may be possible, but that does nothing to show that such a concern *requires* so to be treated. One need not care a rap for others for it to be true that general prosperity enhances others' well-being. Of course, how plausible it is to assume that others *are* motivated by a concern for others, certainly, if these others are thought to extend beyond family and friends, is a question a negative answer to which can seem to reinforce Mandeville's general case.

This, then, is what I take to be the Mandevillian position on virtue and commerce, and it maintains an inherent incompatibility between them. I am not here concerned with the truth of this position, whether as an account of human motivation or as a description of (or of the effects of) economic activity. Rather, I want to raise the question of how Hume avoids this position, avoids it, that is, in the light of his remarks on self-love in Part II of the "Conclusion" to the second *Enquiry*. For Mandeville, it is a case of virtue *or* commerce; for Hume, how can it be a case of virtue *and* commerce?

Throughout Hume's writings, there are remarks about the positive effects on oneself and others of the desires for luxury, wealth, and riches of various sorts. In his essay "Of Commerce" (1752), he gives an especially direct statement of these effects:

> The greatness of a state, and the happiness of its subjects, how independent soever they may be supposed in some respects, are

> commonly allowed to be inseparable with regard to commerce; and as private men receive greater security, in the possession of their trade and riches, from the power of the public, so the public becomes powerful in proportion to the opulence and extensive commerce of private men.[5]

To be sure, Hume immediately goes on to query whether there may not be exceptions to this maxim; but the essay overall contains numerous examples of its truth.

One important example concerns sovereigns: they will not succeed unless they "take mankind as they find them"; they "cannot pretend to introduce any violent change" into mankind's principles and ways of thinking (*Essays* 260). Hume continues:

> ...the less natural any set of principles are, which support a particular society, the more difficulty will a legislator meet with in raising and cultivating them [mankind]. It is his best policy to comply with the common bent of mankind, and give it all the improvements of which it is susceptible. Now, according to the most natural course of things, industry and arts and trade encrease the power of the sovereign as well as the happiness of the subjects; and that policy is violent, which aggrandizes the public by the poverty of individuals. (*Essays*, 260)

What, then, is the "common bent of mankind"? So far as motivation is concerned, Hume gives a clear answer. Were we to try to "infuse into each breast so martial a genius, and such a passion for public good, as to make every one willing to undergo the greatest hardships for the sake of the public," we should find "these principles are too disinterested and too difficult to support"; rather, "it is requisite to govern men by other passions, and animate them with a spirit of avarice and industry, art and luxury" (*Essays*, 262–63). It would be a great boon if we found people moved to action and sacrifice by love of the public good and their fellow man; in fact, we find them moved, typically, by the very things that Mandeville thought they were moved by.

If, motivationally, this is how we find people, then this is how we find them when we turn to the matter of virtue. We need to supply them with a similar sort of motive to be virtuous. And this is what Hume does in Part II of the "Conclusion" to the second *Enquiry*, a curiously neglected part of that work, where he argues that we have an "interested" obligation to virtue (EPM 278).

When Hume asks "whether every man, who has any regard to his own happiness and welfare, will not best find his account in the practice of every moral duty" (EPM 278), he answers in the affirmative and believes it a particular feature of his own moral position that it facilitates such an answer.

When the "dismal dress" in which "many divines" and "some philosophers" have clothed virtue falls away, she will reveal her "sole purpose" to be making "her votaries and all mankind, during every instant of their existence, if possible, cheerful and happy..." (EPM 279). This passage might be interpreted to mean that the overall purpose of virtue is to make us happy, without it being implied that any particular duty that virtue recommends must be to our interest. But Hume quickly goes on:

> ...what theory of morals can ever serve any useful purpose, unless it can show, by a particular detail, that *all* the duties it recommends, are also the true interest of each individual? The peculiar advantage of the foregoing system [Hume's] seems to be, that it furnishes proper mediums for that purpose. (EPM 280; italics added)

It is not entirely clear that this passage can serve as a recapitulation of the preceding one (EPM 279); for this one seems to commit Hume, not so much to the view that the sole purpose of virtue is to make us happy, as to the view that virtue can only serve a useful purpose *at all*, if *all* the duties it recommends are the *true interest* of *each* individual. In short, it seems to imply that duty and interest coincide.

This would be extremely convenient if true, for it would allow us the beginning of a basis to reconcile moral and economic motivation, not by trying to inject an element of benevolence into economic motivation but rather by trying to show the role of self-love in moral motivation. It is a very important step. The problem is that it exposes Hume to a serious difficulty.

In many particulars, Hume's account of human nature in the second *Enquiry* resembles the accounts given earlier by Shaftesbury and Butler.[6] They endow men with other-regarding natural affections; so, too, does Hume. They reject psychological egoism; so, too, does Hume. They place benevolence at the root of human nature and thus treat man from the outset as a social animal; so, too, does Hume. They allow that the satisfaction of our benevolent passions can make us happy, and so, too, does Hume. Most especially, they warn of the dangers of excess in self-love and strongly urge that it, and our powerful self-affections as well, be brought under control. This, too, Hume endorses. Yet, these warnings are in the end, in all three men, just that: the excesses Hume ascribes to self-love in Appendix II of the second *Enquiry* do not lead him, as they do not lead Shaftesbury and Butler, to seek to eradicate self-love and the self-affections from our nature. For Hume, as for them, self-love and the self-affections are powerful parts of that nature, and the talk in all three writers is always of control and regulation, not elimination. The crucial difficulty is to have the wherewithal in one's account of human nature to achieve this control and regulation, something which is required even in the case of economic motivation. Thus, pursuit of self-interest in the mar-

ketplace is not the same as the reckless pursuit of it. Hume, I want to suggest, comes up short in this regard.

In one very important particular with respect to the account of human nature sketched in the second *Enquiry*, Hume makes a familiar point: while we are endowed with self-affections and self-love as well as other-regarding affections and benevolence, and while it is always possible that the latter may be stronger in us than the former, the reverse is typically the case. Of course, benevolence and these other-regarding passions are every bit as much a part of our nature as self-love and our self-regarding passions (EPM 218–232). But when Hume writes of benevolence and the other-regarding passions, he does not typically do so in terms of their extraordinary force, strength, or energy within us; whereas when he writes of self-love he always does so in terms of its "extensive energy" (for example, EPM 218), either directly or indirectly in terms of how this forceful part of our nature, augmented at times by the self-affections, can, as it were, seize control of our lives. In other words, were we to allow ourselves to feel in full measure our benevolent passions, it remains doubtful that they would be sufficiently powerful to grapple with and finally overcome self-love and the self-affections. If restraint is the order of the day, it seems unlikely to be achieved in this way.

In fact, Hume in the second *Enquiry* has very little to work with in order to achieve this restraint of self-love and the self-affections. One course would be to follow Butler and claim that, at least to some extent, we are naturally compassionate to *all*; but it seems reasonably clear that the forcefulness of this compassion diminishes not only as its scope broadens beyond family and friends but also as these others grow spatially remote from us. Beyond a certain point in scope and remoteness, what remains may be compassion (or a form of benevolence) but compassion in a much-weakened state, and it is just unclear how it is to cope with the power of self-love and the self-affections within us. Obviously, were Hume to assert the existence in us of a passion such as love of mankind generally, and to assert as well that it had a force, strength, or energy to rival that of self-love, then restraint of self-love and the self-affections might possibly occur through this perhaps more dominant passion. As noted earlier, however, Hume never asserts any such things as these, and, in fact, such assertions are utterly alien to the rather confined picture of human nature that is conveyed in the second *Enquiry*.

Then, too, in the second *Enquiry*, sympathy is considerably less in evidence than in the *Treatise*, and when it is in evidence it is circumscribed by avowed limitations on its strength and scope. Thus, Hume writes that sympathy "is much fainter than our concern for ourselves, and sympathy with persons remote from us much fainter than that with persons near and contiguous..." (EPM 229). The question arises, then, making all due allowance for our benevolent passions and for sympathy, of how something this limited and comparatively weak is to battle successfully the strength of self-love and the

self-affections within us. How is something this weak to lead us to go against the forceful tug, the "extensive energy" of self-love and private interest? Hume's move is to talk about usefulness and the happiness of mankind, but these, I think, achieve nothing; it is really only in Part II of the "Conclusion" that he faces up to this central, motivational issue. That is why this section is so important. Before turning to it, however, I want to append a word on this other material.

In an interesting passage, Hume affirms that "we must renounce the theory, which accounts for every moral sentiment by the principle of self-love" (EPM 219). We must, he thinks, "adopt a more public affection, and allow, that the interests of society are not, even on their own account, entirely indifferent to us" (EPM 219). Suppose that we do this: what do we do, however, if the pull of our own interests is simply stronger than the pull of the interests of society? Hume envisages that this might well occur, that private interest might be "separate" from public interest and even "contrary" to it (EPM 219); but he does not tell us how to solve the ensuing motivational problem. What he does is to go on to make a point about the usefulness of what contributes to the happiness of society and to link this to a partial account of the origin of morality.

Hume writes:

> Usefulness is only a tendency to a certain end; and it is a contradiction in terms, that anything pleases as means to an end, where the end itself in no wise affects us. If usefulness, therefore, be a source of moral sentiment, and if this usefulness be not always considered with a reference to self; it follows, that everything, which contributes to the happiness of society, recommends itself directly to our approbation and good-will. Here is a principle, which accounts, in great part, for the origin of morality.... (EPM 219)

There are two points to notice here. First, even if it is true that "everything which contributes to the happiness of society recommends itself directly to our approbation and good-will," we are given no instruction about what to do if the degree of recommendation or approbation simply is not great enough to cope with the power of self-love and concern for self. We may still feel positively towards that which contributes to society's happiness, but that feeling cannot be assumed in and of itself, in all cases, to dwarf the strength of self-love. Hume says that, when private and public interest clashed, "we observed the moral sentiments to continue, notwithstanding this disjunction of interest" (EPM 219). There is no reason to dispute this: the point is not that, when private interest and public interest pull in different directions, public interest (and so the moral sentiment) is *extinguished*; it is rather that, even allowing the moral sentiment to persist, we need some reason for thinking its

motive force at least equivalent to that of private interest and self-love. Nothing in this passage provides that reason.

Second, by speaking of "the origin of morality" in the context of our approbation and good will towards that which contributes to the happiness of society, Hume seems to face a quite specific motivational problem. Put baldly, if private interest, and, in Hume's terms, the "moral sentiment" clash, what reason have we to think that we shall be motivated sufficiently by the latter to harm the former? Since there can in Hume be no *a priori* guarantee that we shall be so motivated, we seem to be left hoping that there will not be, as a matter of fact, very many clashes with which we have to contend. Pursuit of virtue, then, turns upon whether we shall be motivated to pursue it, and in this regard we are left to hope that (1) benevolence, sympathy, and our approbation of that which contributes to the happiness of society are jointly stronger than the power of self-love and the self-affections (including prudence) and (2) the number of occasions on which self-love clashes with these others are few.

The difficulty here, obviously, is that too much is left to chance; pursuit of virtue is not quite assured on this picture. What is needed is not, so to speak, more *warmth* in the cause of virtue; what is needed is some more certain basis upon which to claim a sufficiently powerful degree of motivation to pursue virtue, *if* virtue is pulling in a different direction from private interest and *if* we agree, as I think we must, that our love of virtue and of being virtuous cannot be assumed always, or even usually, to be stronger than our concern for self and self-love. Hume seeks to put this motivational issue beyond doubt, by claiming that individual happiness and virtue are linked and, accordingly, that it is in our interest to be moral.

I remarked earlier that one might construe the claim that all the duties which virtue recommends "are also the true interest of each individual" (EPM 280) to be different from the claim that virtue makes "her votaries and all mankind, during every instant of their existence, if possible, cheerful and happy..." (EPM 279). My own view, however, is that the two passages are of a piece: when Hume speaks of virtue making men happy "during every instant of their existence," he is simply stating in less direct terms that all the duties virtue recommends "are also the true interest of each individual." That is, he tries to show that we have an "interested" obligation to virtue (EPM 278) by showing that virtue facilitates our interest or happiness, not in general or in the vast run of cases, but, if he is to be believed, in all cases. If all the duties which virtue recommends are the true interest of each individual, and if this is in fact true of each individual, then when virtue's "dismal dress" falls away, we shall certainly see that her "sole purpose" is to make "her votaries and all mankind, during every instant of their existence, if possible, cheerful and happy." In this way, it would clearly be in our interest to be moral.

But how does Hume show of virtue that all its duties really are the true

interest of each individual? What he tries to do is to show how virtue is agreeable or useful from the point of view of self-interest. He points first to virtues that seem immediately desirable; temperance, he observes, "is advantageous, and the excesses of pleasure hurtful" (EPM 280). He then points to the companionable virtues and observes that "vanity alone...is a sufficient motive to make us wish for the possession" of them (EPM 280). Finally, he turns to broader affairs and ponders why it should be

> more doubtful, that the enlarged virtues of humanity, generosity, beneficence, are desirable with a view to happiness and self-interest, than the limited endowments of ingenuity and politeness. (EPM 281)

Now none of this talk of the agreeableness or usefulness of the virtues is in dispute, and we may concede, therefore, that, when all other things are equal, concern for our own happiness or interest gives us a motive to exhibit virtue. But what happens if all other things are not equal, if, that is, we see self-love pulling us away from indulging the benevolent affections in this case? If our own happiness falls in with the "happiness of mankind," we have a motive to give vent to the "moral sentiment"; but what if this is not the case? Then the talk of the agreeableness and usefulness of the virtues does not *per se* give us a motive to seek the happiness of mankind.

Hume next remarks that, contrary to vulgar supposition, there really is no contradiction "between the *selfish* and *social* sentiments or dispositions" (EPM 281; italics in original). The point to our challenge over a motive to virtue, however, does not suppose that there is any such contradiction or that giving vent to our social sentiments cannot make us happy. The point simply requires us to agree that, sometimes, our own happiness is seen, and seen truly, to lie in a different direction from the happiness of others. What motive to virtue have we now, when it costs us something in terms of our own happiness?

Hume is right to observe that "every affection...when gratified by success, gives a satisfaction proportioned to its force and violence" (EPM 281-82); but the force and violence of our social sentiments may not be that of our self-regarding ones. So, Hume goes further:

> ...besides this advantage, common to all, the immediate feeling of benevolence and friendship, humanity and kindness, is sweet, smooth, tender, and agreeable, independent of all fortunes and accidents. These virtues are besides attended with a pleasing consciousness or remembrance, and keep us in humour with ourselves as well as others; while we retain the agreeable reflection of having done our part towards mankind and society. (EPM 282)

Here, Hume tries to force the pace in favor of the social sentiments. For if satisfaction of social sentiments is as much productive of our happiness as the satisfaction of the self-regarding sentiments, and if we have these other pleasing aspects of doing our part towards mankind to consider as well, then perhaps the motivational issue can be decided in favor of the social sentiments and mankind. Again, however, we can agree that satisfaction of our social passions brings us happiness and agree as well that a "pleasing consciousness" and an "agreeable reflection" attend the satisfaction of these passions; but if self-love proves stronger on the occasion we are provided no reason to think that we shall be motivated to harm our own happiness or interest. Hume realizes the matter is still in doubt: hence, the well-known example of the sensible knave.

I believe there is a way of construing this example that makes the sensible knave's case directly relevant to a discussion of commerce; in fact, the construal comes from Hume's own treatment of the example.

From the point of view of self-interest, the sensible knave is one who thinks that "an act of iniquity or infidelity will make a considerable addition to his fortune, without causing any considerable breach in the social union and confederacy" (EPM 282). He is one who, treating honesty as the best policy, "observes the general rule, and takes advantage of all the exceptions" (EPM 283). Of this character, I wish to make several observations *vis-à-vis* Hume's discussion of him.

First, Hume seems at times to object to the sensible knave on the ground that he has sacrificed a good deal to obtain very little. This person shows "no reluctance to the thoughts of villainy and baseness," is enamored of "profit and pecuniary advantage," and seeks "worthless toys and gewgaws" (EPM 283). The cost of obtaining these tawdry advantages is "a total loss of reputation, and the forfeiture of all future trust and confidence with mankind" (EPM 283). Yet, why should such catastrophe be true of one who keeps the general rule and takes advantage of the exceptions? Hume never says; the assumption is simply made that the sensible knave is a knave, rather than a person who finds that which serves the interests of others on this occasion does not serve his own. (Importantly, those who find *this* the case, I think, includes all of us, at some time or other.) For the present appeal to work, Hume must make realistic the losses he envisages. After all, we all know people who break their promises or lie, yet have neither incurred nor produced anything like the losses Hume cites. The point is not that the sensible knave can free-ride on the good behavior of others (though this may occur); it is that the desire for his own happiness is sufficiently powerful in him that, should he see it as pulling in a different direction from what would serve the interests of others, the mere possibility of the losses Hume cites most likely will not be enough in strength to get him to forego his own happiness. And what is true of him is true of each of us.

Second, the sensible knave, then, is each of us, confronted with situations in which our happiness is pressing us to depart from the general rule. He is not a special breed of man, but all of us who find ourselves from time to time in circumstances where concern for our own happiness or interest is driving us and where countervailing motivation is weaker. In these circumstances, it is always easy to suggest that, under the pressure of this drive, we misperceive matters, that, really, as Hume suggests, foregoing exceptions and adhering to the rule is what is truly in our interests. But why should we believe any such thing as this (especially since it involves guesses about the future)? The point of sensible knave examples is not avoided by claiming that they always, systematically, involve misperception of where our true happiness or interest lies, in the absence of some reason to suppose that such systematic misperception always occurs. In fact, it may well be true that I perceive correctly where my true happiness lies and that it does lie in taking an exception.

Third, the sensible knave is, in the conditions described, anyone who requires a motive to act against their own happiness or interest and who does not find one sufficiently powerful to counteract self-love. Hume's tactic is to look for such a motive in the agreeableness and usefulness of the virtues and the rules that reflect them: if we reflect carefully enough, we shall see that these rules serve our interest and so behave accordingly. As a result, we shall not be faced with the choice of happiness or virtue. But sensible knave examples give the lie to this view, and examples in which one's happiness is even at the *cost* of other people's are easily multiplied. What we need is a powerful motive to forego our own happiness, when it does not coincide with the happiness of others, in circumstances in which concern for happiness or self is one of the most powerful driving forces in our lives. In Hume, and other of the eighteenth century British moralists—for example, Shaftesbury and Butler—such a motive is sought in trying to develop a link between happiness and virtue, a move, I am suggesting, that is of doubtful success.

We could, of course, look elsewhere for the requisite motive. We might employ the army and police to track down and punish sensible knaves and might broadcast this fact; we might try to develop a cadre of informers who alerted us as to people suspected of preferring their own happiness to other peoples' in the cases in point; and we might try to develop a mode of instruction or a kind of training that simply conditioned people to forego exceptions to rules or, if we balk at the thought of conditioning, that inculcates in people a habit of mind and/or action that, to the same degree, brings them to forego exceptions.[7] All these things may possibly provide a motive of a strength to battle and overcome self-love (though, equally, of course, they may not). The problem now, however, is to see how these ploys are to be circumscribed in their use.

Hume depicts the sensible knave as a person who pursues "worthless toys and gewgaws" and shows "no reluctance to the thoughts of villainy and

baseness"; in the same breath, he castigates him as one who is enamored of "profit and pecuniary advantage" (EPM 283). All of us in the marketplace, however, are in search of profit and pecuniary advantage; indeed, these are precisely what Mandeville and Hume himself in "Of Commerce" hold to be the forces that drive markets. If we follow Mandeville, then we may hold that pursuit of one's own advantage or happiness fortunately, not as a matter of benevolent motivation but as an unintended by-product of self-interested motivation, furthers the advantage or happiness of others. This seems to be Hume's view in "Of Commerce." But when we turn to Hume on virtue and interest in the second *Enquiry*, he seems to urge us in motivation away from interest and the Mandevillian picture; in fact, to the extent that the sensible knave incorporates that picture then to that extent the picture is rejected. If I am, as it were, to rely upon outside factors to motivate me not to pursue my own happiness even when it lies apart from the happiness of others and so to prevent me from becoming a sensible knave, then how exactly do I specify the domain over which such forces legitimately and illegitimately reign? Why, for example, should we not insist on people intentionally, deliberately taking account of the happiness of others in the marketplace and so hold those who fall short in this regard to book? How do we compartmentalize our lives so that, when the butcher, brewer, and baker pursue their trades and engage the public in all kinds of transactions, they may pursue profit and pecuniary advantage, whereas in other of their activities, they may not pursue these things? I am not maintaining that one cannot compartmentalize one's life; I am only pointing to the fact that we are desperately in need of criteria by which to decide how to break up our lives and so to determine when a certain form of motivation is appropriate.

Unless it is true that our own advantage or happiness coincides with the advantage or happiness of others, we certainly have a motive to behave as a sensible knave would. If we doubt the truth of the antecedent here, we would need to provide, given the power Hume ascribes to self-love, a motive to prefer the happiness of others over our own. But if we accept the truth of the antecedent, then we face a choice, motivationally: we either accept Mandeville's account of how self-interest facilitates the happiness of others or we do not. If we accept that account, then we do not require benevolent motivation, a concern for the happiness of others, or motivation based on the "moral sentiment" in order to produce the happiness of others; if we reject that account, then we seem to require these things in order to produce their happiness. Otherwise, we are not given a motive, and certainly not a powerful enough motive, to move us away from pursuit of our own advantage or happiness.

So far as I can see, then, Hume is forced either to adopt the Mandevillian picture of motivation or to argue, as I have suggested, that the discussion of economic activities (and motivation) must be kept strictly apart from cases of

behavior dealt with and summed up by the sensible knave example. If this latter is true, one cannot draw, or at least use, parallels between motivation in the economic case and the case of the sensible knave. With more space, however, I should want to argue that these things cannot be kept apart, most especially, that one cannot use talk of the artificial virtues and justice in the sensible knave example in order to separate that case from cases involving economic motivation. To my mind, the problem here for Hume runs deeper than any such simple ploy as that.

NOTES

1 While this question is related to the general issue of the morality of capitalism, it is not, of course, identical to it. Thus, for example, I am not here concerned with any question of fairness about a free-market economic structure that people enter and leave with unequal holdings that are unrelated to any issue of, say, personal merit.

2 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Glasgow Ed., 2 vols.), edited by R. H. Campbell, A. S. Skinner, W. B. Todd (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), I ii 2.

3 David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), hereafter cited as EHU or EPM.

4 Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees* (2nd ed., 1723, 2 vols.), edited by F. B. Kaye (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924).

5 David Hume, "Of Commerce," in *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, edited by Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis, Liberty Fund Press, 1985), 255; hereafter cited as *Essays*.

6 For a discussion of Shaftesbury and Butler on human nature, see my *Joseph Butler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), forthcoming.

7 I owe these suggestions to James Moore, John P. Wright, and Roger Emerson.