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Fantastick Associations and Addictive General Rules: A Fundamental Difference between Hutcheson and Hume

MICHAEL B. GILL

The belief that God created human beings for some moral purpose underlies nearly all the moral philosophy written in Great Britain in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. David Hume attacks this theological conception of human nature on all fronts. It is out of these attacks that Hume develops his own "science of man" based solely on "experience and observation."¹

Francis Hutcheson is often taken to be the most important positive influence on Hume. And there can be no doubt that Hume does take on board several crucial Hutchesonian elements. But Hutcheson's moral theory, like that of most of his contemporaries, is grounded in a theological conception of human nature to which Hume is adamantly opposed.²

In this paper I will examine how Hume's disagreements with Hutcheson embody the anti-theological purpose that defines Hume's work as a whole. I will look, in particular, at Hume's and Hutcheson's different positions on the principles of association. I hope to show how Hume's use of these principles in the *Treatise* advances his larger goal of placing "the science of man" on "a foundation almost entirely new" (T xvi).

I will proceed, first, by explaining Hutcheson's conception of human nature and his use of the principles of association; second, by sketching in broad outline how Hume's accounts of the origins of justice and natural virtue undermine crucial components of Hutcheson's conception of human nature; and third, by elucidating in more detail an aspect of Hume's associationism that is particularly revealing of his distance from Hutcheson.

I. Hutcheson and Association

Hutcheson discusses the mind's tendency to associate in all of his writings, but his most extensive treatment of the matter comes in his *Essay on the Passions*.³ Hutcheson begins the *Essay* by telling us that something is good if and only if the perception of it "Causes, or Occasions" a pleasurable feeling, and that something is evil if and only if the perception of it causes or occasions a painful feeling (EP 2).

Crucially, Hutcheson denies that all of our pleasures and pains are of the same type (EP 1–8).⁴ He holds, rather, that there are at least five distinct types of pleasures and pains and that each of them grounds a different irreducible type of good and evil. There are, first, the pleasures and pains caused by things we perceive through the external senses of taste, touch, smell, etc.; things that cause such pleasures are called naturally good, while things that cause such pains are called naturally evil. Second, there are the "*Pleasant Perceptions*, arising from *regular, harmonious, uniform* Objects" (EP 5); the things that cause these pleasures are called beautiful.⁵ Third, there are the pleasures and pains we feel upon perceiving the happiness or misery of other human beings; the things that cause these pleasures are called public goods while those that cause the corresponding pains are called public evils. Fourth, there are pleasures and pains, usually called approval and disapproval, that we feel upon perceiving the actions of others; the actions that cause approval are called virtuous or morally good, while those that cause disapproval are called vicious or morally evil. Finally, there are the pleasures and pains we feel upon perceiving others' moral perceptions of our own actions; the pleasure of perceiving others' approval of one's actions is called the feeling of honor, while the pain of perceiving others' disapproval is called the feeling of shame.

For Hutcheson, then, natural goodness, beauty, the public good, virtue and honor are all defined by our pleasures and pains. He does not think, however, that these are defined by just any of our actual or occurrent pleasures and pains. He holds, rather, that they are defined by the pleasures and pains we feel under certain privileged conditions.⁶

What conditions does Hutcheson privilege? Which of his pleasures are definitive of beauty, virtue and the rest? This is where Hutcheson's concept of association comes in.⁷ Something is truly beautiful or virtuous, Hutcheson believes, if and only if it would cause or occasion the appropriate type of pleasure in someone whose constitution is in its original⁸ pre-associative state. Pleasures that flow from a constitution altered by association, in contrast, lead away from the true or real.⁹

According to Hutcheson, each of our senses—the moral, aesthetic, and public senses no less than the senses of taste and touch—was originally constituted such that we would feel a distinct type of pleasure upon perceiving objects with certain distinct features. As a result of custom, education, and habit, however, we often come to associate that distinct pleasure with objects

that do not possess the features that would have originally caused or occasioned it. So only some of our pleasures accord with our original constitution, while others are a departure from it, resulting as they do from the associations that alter our senses. It is the original pleasures, on Hutcheson's view, that define what is natural, true, or real, while the associative pleasures are unnatural, prejudicial, or fantastick.¹⁰

Hutcheson provides many examples of how custom, education, and habit can give rise to associations that corrupt our original constitution.¹¹ By looking at some of these we can sharpen our picture of his distinction between original and associative pleasures.

One of Hutcheson's clearest examples of associative corruption is the miser's obsession with wealth (EP 97, 111–112). People originally pursue wealth, Hutcheson tells us, not because they find possessing it pleasurable itself but because it enables them to acquire things that do give pleasure. Some people, however, come to associate wealth directly with the pleasures, and such associations can produce a desire for wealth that is stronger than the desire for the things wealth can buy. But while pursuing wealth in order to satisfy original desires can be "laudable" (EP 9), the miserly desire for money as an end in itself is unnatural or fantastick. As Hutcheson puts it, association has raised the passions of the miser "into an extravagant Degree, beyond the proportion of real Good in the object" (EP 95).

In his *Inquiry concerning Beauty* Hutcheson sketches how association can corrupt the aesthetic sense in a similar way. In that work, Hutcheson argues that observation reveals that humans were originally constituted to feel aesthetic pleasure upon perceiving objects that possess the particular feature of "*Uniformity amidst Variety*."¹² He concludes, therefore, that objects that possess this feature truly are beautiful. Hutcheson also contends that Roman architecture possesses this beauty-making feature. He acknowledges, however, that the Goths did not find Roman architecture beautiful, that Roman buildings did not give rise in them to aesthetic pleasure.¹³ But this does not constitute a counterexample to his position, Hutcheson maintains, because the reactions of the Goths are best explained as resulting from association and not as flowing from their original constitution. Hutcheson suggests, specifically, that the Goths were in a situation similar to those "*Reformers*" who came to associate their vehement hatred of Catholicism with all "*Popish Buildings*," thus blinding themselves to the true beauty of Catholic churches.¹⁴ He also believes that observation will reveal that the buildings the Goths did find beautiful themselves possessed the feature of uniformity amidst variety. He concludes, therefore, that the original pre-associative constitution of even the Goths was such that it would have led them to find Roman architecture beautiful. And so Hutcheson's general claim about the true nature of beauty and his particular claim about Roman architecture are not undermined by the aesthetic reactions of the Goths.¹⁵

Now just as Hutcheson believes that there is one particular feature common to all the objects we were originally disposed to find beautiful, so too he believes that there is one particular feature common to all the actions we were originally disposed morally to approve of. All originally approvable actions, according to Hutcheson, are "intended to procure the greatest Moment of Good toward the most extensive System to which our Power can reach" (EP xv-xvi). As he goes on to say, the affection of "*universal calm Good-will or Benevolence*" is "the Temper which we esteem in the highest Degree, according to the natural Constitution of our Soul" (EP xvi). Hutcheson maintains, that is, that we were originally constituted to feel approval upon perceiving actions intended to maximize happiness.

But Hutcheson also believes that the content of morality is defined by the approvals of our original moral sense, just as beauty is defined by our original aesthetic sense and natural good is defined by our original external senses. Hutcheson concludes, therefore, that one is virtuous just to the extent that one intends to benefit humanity as a whole. As he puts it in one famous but by no means anomalous passage, "*That Action is best, which procures the greatest Happiness for the greatest Numbers; and that worst, which, in like manner, occasions Misery.*"¹⁶

Of course Hutcheson realizes that many people approve of "partial" actions, i.e., of actions intended to benefit a few individuals to the detriment of humanity as a whole. He thinks, however, that he can accommodate such partiality, just as he accommodated the Goths' hatred of Roman architecture and the reformers' hatred of Catholic churches. His method is: first, to show that the original moral sense approves of universal or impartial benevolence; and second, to show that all partial approvals can be best explained as resulting from the associative corruption of a moral sense originally disposed to approve of impartial benevolence.

Hutcheson thinks he can accomplish the first task by observing individuals' moral responses to actions that do not affect them in any way—the actions, say, of someone who lived in an earlier age or on the other side of the world. In such cases, Hutcheson believes, self-interest will not interfere with the moral responses—the moral sense will have been in effect isolated from the other senses—and so we should be able to get an accurate reading on the moral sense's original unpolluted character. What Hutcheson claims, predictably, is that observation reveals that when placed in this type of controlled environment people do in fact approve of impartial benevolence.¹⁷

Hutcheson also suggests two different ways such an impartially benevolent moral sense can become corrupted by association. Consider, first of all, someone who has been raised to believe, falsely, in the "*Impiety, Cruelty, [and] Profaneness*" of a foreign group of people (EP 100). Given this false belief and given the original disposition to approve of that which promotes the happiness of humanity as a whole, this person will come to disapprove of the

foreigners' way of life, since that way of life, as far as he knows, is detrimental to humanity. His original disapproval of the foreigners, in other words, is best explained as flowing from an impartially benevolent moral sense and false beliefs. But if his false beliefs are not corrected early on, there will develop in his mind a strong association between the feeling of disapproval and the thought of the foreigners. And if this associative habit becomes ingrained deeply enough, he may very well continue to disapprove of their way of life even after he has learned the truth. His moral response to the foreigners, that is, may become twisted away from the impartial benevolence of his original moral constitution by a long-standing association born of but outliving a partial (mis)representation of the facts. The likelihood of this will only increase, moreover, if his disapproval of the foreigners is also associated in his mind with several other strong dispositions, such as loyalty or love of country. As Hutcheson puts it,

[T]he constant *Indulgence* of any Desire, the frequent *Repetition* of it, the *diverting* our Minds from all other Pursuits, the Strain of *Conversation* among Men of the same Temper, who often haunt together, the *Contagion* in the very Air and Countenance of the passionate, beget such wild *Associations* of ideas, that a sudden *Conviction of Reason* will not stop the Desire or Aversion, any more than an Argument will surmount the *Loathings* or *Aversions*, acquired against certain Meats or Drinks by Surfeits or emetick Preparations. (EP 96)

Now consider, secondly, someone who has been raised to believe that one particular trait—"such as *Fortitude*, *Propagation of true Religion*, [or] *Zeal for a Party*"—is the necessary and sufficient means for the production of the happiness of humanity as a whole (EP 99). Given this false belief and an impartially benevolent moral sense, it follows that this person will approve of anything consistent with this trait and disapprove of anything in conflict with it. Eventually, however, there may form in this person's mind a fantastical association between approval and the single trait. And this may lead him to approve of actions consistent with the trait but harmful to humanity as a whole and to disapprove of actions inconsistent with the trait but beneficial overall. In such a case, Hutcheson concludes, the "other Virtues are overlooked, and the very *End* to which the admired Qualities are subservient is forgotten. Thus some *Phantoms* of Virtue are raised, wholly opposite to its true Nature, and to the sole End of it, the *publick Good*" (EP 99).

So Hutcheson's view of the content of virtue rests on two claims. There is, first, the more general claim that the true, natural, or real is defined by our senses as they were originally constituted. Then there is, second, the more specific claim that we were originally constituted to approve of impartially

benevolent intentions. From these two claims Hutcheson's conclusion follows: namely, that someone is virtuous to the extent that he intends to maximize the happiness of all.

This argument of Hutcheson's for the content of virtue raises two crucial questions. First, why does Hutcheson privilege original pleasures over non-original associative ones? And second, is it true, as Hutcheson claims, that we are originally disposed to approve of impartial benevolence and that all moral partiality results from associative habit? Let us now examine the first question—why Hutcheson privileges the original. We will then turn to Hume for an examination of the second.

Original¹⁸ dispositions are "*Principles* in our Nature, not brought upon us by our own *Art*, or that of others" (EP 201). They are implanted parts of our constitution, unexplained explainers, the points at which our empirical explanations must end. They are the aspects of human nature that our observations cannot get behind.¹⁹

Now Hutcheson never really provides a detailed explicit argument for privileging these original dispositions over non-original or associative ones, and this in itself is interesting given the importance of this privilege for his philosophy as a whole.²⁰ At least part of the explanation for this lack of argument, I believe, is that Hutcheson's attitudes toward association and originality lay at the center of his theological world-view, and the viability of that world-view was not something Hutcheson thought to submit to philosophical scrutiny.

According to that theological world-view, all true explanations ultimately end at God. We make that last explanatory step up to God when our empirical explanations reach the "artless," "natural," or original (EP 199–201). That is to say, once our observations of human behavior reach dispositions that cannot be explained in terms of other more fundamental principles, we then account for those dispositions by "resolving" them into the (super)nature of our Creator.²¹

Once our explanations reach the level of our Creator, moreover, they lead easily into justification. Dispositions that cannot be explained in terms of any other more fundamental principles of human nature are explained in terms of God's (super)nature. And any disposition that God directly implanted in our soul must be correct, unimpeachable, as justified as anything can ever be.²² In other words, once our explanations get us all the way to God we automatically get justification as well. We might say, then, that within Hutcheson's theological world-view, where explanation ends justification begins.

This theologically sanctioned collapse of justification into explanation explains well Hutcheson's arguments for the content of morality. For if it is assumed that judgments are justified if they accord with the explanatorily fundamental passions of human nature, it then makes good sense to try to

establish that impartial benevolence is the height of virtue, first, by showing that all explanatorily fundamental approvals are of impartial benevolence, and, second, by showing that approvals of that which is in conflict with impartial benevolence can be explained (away) by referring to forces other than the simple "artless" moral sense.

Hutcheson's commitment to this collapse of justification into explanation also explains his claim that "*Rancour, ... disinterested Malice, Revenge, [and] Misanthropy*" are "*overgrowth[s] of [our] just natural Affection[s]*" and not original to human nature (EP 100).²³ For if malice, vengeance, and misanthropy were original, then Hutcheson's belief that we ought to cultivate all original dispositions would begin to look morally quite problematic.

We can also now see why Hutcheson frequently condemns associations and exhorts us to prevent and dissolve them in almost every case.²⁴ If we can kick our passionate associative habits, Hutcheson's conception of human nature implies, we will regain our original God-given state. And that state is best for us and others in every conceivable way.

Hutcheson suggests, as well, an interesting method for freeing ourselves from fantastick associations, namely, by "frequent Meditation and Reflection" on our passions, their origins, and their objects (EP 168).²⁵ He seems to think that if we reflect diligently on passions born of association we will come to see their foolishness, and that if we remind ourselves of this foolishness often enough the passions' grip on us will eventually weaken. Hutcheson believes, that is, that reflection undermines passions born of association.

There is some evidence that Hume agrees with Hutcheson that we ought to submit our passions to "frequent Meditation and Reflection," that Hume too thinks that this is a salutary method for determining which passions we ought to live by.²⁶ But Hume would deny that original passions must survive reflection while associative ones must fail. For according to Hume, passions born of association ground much of what is impartial and praiseworthy in human life while original passions can often lead to condemnable partiality. Let us examine Hume's account of morality now, focusing on how his explanations constitute the rejection of the theological conception of human nature that led Hutcheson to condemn the fantastick associations of ideas.²⁷

II. Hume and Association

Hume uses principles of association far more than Hutcheson does. They are central to his accounts of causality, the passions, and morals. Indeed, Hume himself writes in the *Abstract* that "if anything can intitle the author [of the *Treatise*] to so glorious a name as that of an *inventor*, 'tis the use he makes of the principle of the association of ideas, which enters into most of his philosophy" (T 661–662).²⁸ I am then inclined to agree with John Passmore's assessment that "even after the completion of the *Treatise*, [Hume] thought

that his associationism was his most notable achievement."²⁹

Given what we have learned of Hutcheson, moreover, we can now see at least part of the reason Hume thought his use of association was so innovative. For while Hutcheson emphasizes the ways in which association corrupts our original impartial moral sense, Hume argues that association produces much of the moral impartiality we evidence and, further, that our original passions were extremely partial. Hume does not think, of course, that this shows that we ought to embrace the moral partiality that Hutcheson condemns but rather that Hutcheson is wrong to tie moral rectitude to what is pre-associative. And by exposing this error, Hume effectively undermines the theological conception of human nature that committed Hutcheson to condemning the changes wrought on our nature by association.

I cannot address here all of the many ways Hume uses principles of association in Book III of the *Treatise*, let alone in the *Treatise* as a whole.³⁰ Instead, what I will do is first briefly sketch in how Hume's explanations of justice and natural virtue subvert Hutcheson's conception of our original pre-associative constitution; and then, second, examine in more detail a principle of association that brings into especially sharp focus Hume's distance from Hutcheson.

Hume begins his account of justice by denying one of Hutcheson's most fundamental claims, namely, that love towards humanity is pre-associative and original while hatred is associative and unoriginal. Hume's rejection of this explanatory asymmetry between love and hatred relies to a large extent on the psychology he develops in Book II of the *Treatise*. There, Hume argues that love and hate are caused by the qualities individual persons possess, not by their simple humanity itself. He writes,

But tho' the object of love and hatred be always some other person, 'tis plain that the object is not, properly speaking, the *cause* of these passions, or alone sufficient to excite them. For since love and hatred are directly contrary in their sensation, and have the same object in common, if that object were also their cause, it wou'd produce these opposite passions in an equal degree; and as they must, from the very first moment, destroy each other, none of them wou'd ever be able to make its appearance. There must, therefore, be some cause different from the object. (T 330)

I feel love for someone, Hume tells us, because she is associated in my mind with a quality that causes me pleasure, just as I feel hatred for someone because he is associated in my mind with a quality that causes me pain. Both people are humans, of course, but that fact merely enables the association of impressions and ideas to work in my mind. Their humanity, we could say, is merely an associative conductor of impressions and ideas, not a quality that

itself can arouse either love or hatred. As Hume puts it when attacking a conception of justice that resembles Hutcheson's,

[M]an in general, or human nature, is nothing but the object both of love and hatred, and requires some other cause, which by a double relation of impressions and ideas, may excite these passions. In vain wou'd we endeavour to elude this hypothesis. There are no phænomena that point out any such kind affection to men, independent of their merit, and every other circumstance (T 481-482).³¹

So there is no such thing as the love of humanity merely as such and all our particular loves are just as associative in origin as our hatreds. Thus, if we avoid hatred only because it is associative and unoriginal, we will have to avoid love as well. This explanatory symmetry between hatred and love, however, poses a grave threat to Hutcheson, whose conception of human nature leads him to draw an associative-versus-nonassociative distinction between the two motives.

But although Hume thinks love and hatred have associative origins he does not think all our passions do. Some passions, he tells us, are "implanted in human nature" and cannot be explained by principles of association (T 481). It is these implanted or original passions that fill the explanatory role, within Hume's philosophy, of Hutcheson's natural senses. They are the points at which empirical explanations must end, the unexplained explainers. Observation cannot discover anything behind them.³²

Hume, however, does not find as many pre-associative original passions as Hutcheson does. Instead he finds these three: the "natural appetite betwixt the sexes,"³³ "the natural affection, which [parents] bear their children," and "selfishness" (T 486). Hume goes on to argue, moreover, that these passions alone would originally have combined to form in us an "unequal affection" or the tendency to promote the welfare of ourselves and our families even if it means harming humanity in general (T 488).³⁴ As Hume sees it, then, the constitution of our original pre-associative passions is characterized by "partiality," not by a Hutchesonian concern for the human species as a whole (T 488). Thus Hume writes,

In vain shou'd we expect to find, in *uncultivated nature*, a remedy to this inconvenience; or hope for any inartificial principle of the human mind, which might controul those partial affections, and make us overcome the temptations arising from our circumstances. (T 488)

He continues:

[O]ur natural uncultivated ideas of morality, instead of providing a remedy for the partiality of our affections, do rather conform themselves to that partiality, and give it an additional force and influence. (T 489)

We should not fail to see in these statements a criticism of Hutcheson, who believed that humans' original passions would have led them to live together in perfect harmony.³⁵

Hume himself argues that justice originates in rules or conventions that alter or restrict the "partial and contradictory motions" of the original implanted human passions.³⁶ As he writes,

The remedy, then, is not deriv'd from nature, but from *artifice*; or more properly speaking, nature provides a remedy in the judgment and understanding, for what is irregular and incommodious in the affections. (T 489)

So while Hutcheson thinks any redirection of our original passions brought about by convention leads us away from morality, Hume thinks it is only as a result of convention that justice (a significant part of morality for both philosophers) ever comes into being.

And thus justice establishes itself by a kind of convention or agreement....Without such a convention, no one wou'd ever have dream'd, that there was such a virtue as justice, or have been induc'd to conform his actions to it. (T 498)³⁷

Hume's account of natural virtue might initially seem to be quite similar to Hutcheson's.³⁸ But although Hume and Hutcheson reject moral rationalism for the same reasons,³⁹ the differences between their positive views on the approvals that define natural virtue are no less significant than their differences on justice. For while Hutcheson holds that these approvals are original unanalyzable facts of human nature, Hume attempts to explain how they develop as a result of the operation of other, more fundamental principles.

The key to Hume's explanation of our approvals is sympathy, which is, as he puts it, the "chief source of moral distinctions" (T 618). Now Humean sympathy is not a passion itself but rather the process whereby passions are communicated from one person to another. And what is crucial to note for our purposes is that this process, just like that which produces love and hatred, is associative. Indeed, Hume points out that all three principles of association can play a role in the sympathetic communication of passions, writing,

For besides the relation of cause and effect, by which we are convinc'd of the reality of the passion, with which we sympathize; besides this, I say, we must be assisted by the relations of resemblance and congruity, in order to feel the sympathy in its full perfection. (T320)

On Hume's account, then, passions that are sympathetically communicated are not original in the sense of being non-associative.⁴⁰ They are, rather, two or three times removed from fundamental pre-associative dispositions.

So for Hume none of our approvals—correct or incorrect—occupy the ultimate explanatory position Hutcheson claimed for them. They all result from the associative process of sympathy. To the extent that Hume's sympathy-based explanation of approval is successful, therefore, Hutcheson's project of trying to read the content of morality off of our pre-associative constitution must be counted a failure. For if Hume is right, the origins of the passions that ground all moral evaluations are ineluctably associative.

Now Hume is similar to Hutcheson in that he maintains that virtue is defined not in terms of just any of our actual or occurrent approvals but only in terms of certain privileged ones. Hume holds, specifically, that virtue is defined by the approvals one feels (or would feel) from the general point of view. But Hume's general point of view is not privileged because it is somehow more original than other points of view (as is Hutcheson's pre-associative moral sense). It is privileged, rather, because it successfully corrects for the inescapable *partiality* of most of our actual, sympathetically induced approvals.⁴¹ As Hume explains, we tend to sympathize more "With our countrymen, than with foreigners" and so must "fix on some *steady* and *general* points of view" in order to "prevent those continual *contradictions*" that the variability of our moral sentiments would otherwise precipitate (T 581–582).

So both Hutcheson and Hume seek to underscore the impartiality of our moral judgments. But while Hume's account of that impartiality involves the associative process of sympathy, approvals that are typically partial, and a learned shift of perspective, Hutcheson's account relies exclusively on an explanatorily fundamental moral sense.

Hume realizes, however, that his sympathy-based explanation of approval and his account of the general point of view still do not adequately explain why we make the moral judgments we do. For it seems that sympathy, as Hume conceives of it, would cause us to approve of only that which *actually* benefits people, that the favorable sentiments that give rise in us to approval can be sympathetically communicated only if someone else actually experiences them. But we sometimes approve of character traits that in fact produce no benefit; some of our approvals seem unconnected to any other favorable sentiments. The socially useful traits of a person stranded in the desert, for instance, help no one and yet we approve of them nonetheless.

"Virtue in rags is still virtue." As Hume puts the objection,

Sympathy interests us in the good of mankind; and if sympathy were the source of our esteem for virtue, that sentiment of approbation cou'd only take place, where the virtue actually attain'd its end, and was beneficial to mankind. Where it fails of its end, 'tis only an imperfect means; and therefore can never acquire any merit from that end. (T 584)

Hume responds to this objection by deploying one of his favorite principles of association—our "addiction to general rules." Since the ways in which Hume uses this principle throughout the *Treatise* illustrate the larger issues under consideration here, let us turn to a fuller discussion of it now.

III. The Addiction to General Rules

As we saw from the *Abstract*, Hume was quite proud of his use of the principles of association. But I think he was especially pleased with his discovery of "our addiction to general rules." For at several points in the *Treatise* he goes out of his way to underscore the novelty and explanatory power of this principle. In one passage, for instance, he writes, "It may not be amiss to observe on this occasion, that the influence of general rules and maxims on the passions very much contributes to facilitate the effects of all the principles, which we shall explain in the progress of this treatise" (T 293). It is probably worth mentioning, as well, that Hume frequently italicizes the words "general rules," as though he were using them to denote a specific well-defined piece of his technical apparatus.⁴²

Hume offers a particularly clear description of his conception of our "addiction to general rules" in his discussion of the "measures of allegiance" (T 549–553). There he argues that our feeling of obligation to obey the government originates in the benefits the government provides us. He acknowledges, however, that some people feel the obligation to obey even after their government has become so tyrannical that it does not benefit them at all. This would seem to constitute a counterexample to Hume's account, since he claims that the benefit causes the feeling of obligation but in such a case the feeling of obligation exists even though the benefit does not. In response Hume writes,

[W]e may observe, that the maxim wou'd here be false, that *when the cause ceases, the effect must cease also*. For there is a principle of human nature, which we have frequently taken notice of, that men are mightily addicted to *general rules*, and that we often carry our maxims beyond those reasons, which first induc'd us to establish them. Where cases are similar in many circumstances, we are apt to put

them on the same footing, without considering, that they differ in the most material circumstances, and that the resemblance is more apparent than real.... [G]eneral rules commonly extend beyond the principles, on which they are founded.... (T 551)

Whatever it is we believe or feel in many identical cases, Hume tells us, we will also tend to believe or feel in resembling but crucially different cases. "[W]e transfer our experience in past instances to objects which are resembling, but are not exactly the same with those concerning which we have had experience" (T 147). Our addiction to general rules is, in other words, something like the associative tendency to *overgeneralize*. As Hume puts it,

When an object is found by experience to be always accompany'd with another; whenever the first object appears, tho' changed in very material circumstances; we naturally fly to the conception of the second, and form an idea of it in as lively and strong a manner, as if we had infer'd its existence by the justest and most authentic conclusion of our understanding. (T 374)⁴³

It is this tendency to overgeneralize that explains why some individuals feel obligated to obey tyrannical governments: although the original cause of this feeling of obligation was the coincidence of obedience and self-interest, such people eventually come to associate the feeling directly with obedience itself and so feel obligated to obey even when obedience and self-interest no longer coincide.⁴⁴

Now for our purposes what is so interesting about Hume's addictive general rules is that they are startlingly similar to Hutcheson's fantastick associations of ideas. Hume's account of obedience to tyrants and Hutcheson's account of miserliness both turn on the same psychological principle. In both cases, the explanations rely at crucial junctures on the claim that humans have the tendency to develop associative habits that nourish sentiments to such an extent that they eventually outgrow their original causes.

Do Hume and Hutcheson use this associative principle to explain the same types of things? Do they share the same attitude toward our tendency to overgeneralize? Well, as we have seen, Hutcheson uses fantastick associations to explain error. Such associations, as he sees it, lead us away from what is true and right and are therefore condemnable. And Hume sometimes uses general rules for a similar purpose, namely, to explain why people make the mistakes they do. The moral obligation to tyrants, which we have just looked at, is a good example of this. Hume thinks we ought to resist tyrants, not obey them. But the people he is discussing at T 551–552 fail to realize they ought to resist because their addiction to general rules has led them to associate obligation directly with obedience. Racial prejudice is another mistake Hume thinks we

fall into because of our addiction to general rules. If we develop the habit of thinking that "an *Irishman* cannot have wit, and a *Frenchman* cannot have solidity" we might very well continue to think this even after we have met a witty Irishman or a judicious Frenchman (T 146). We may get into the habit, that is, of transferring our experience of past Frenchmen to our experience of the Frenchman in front of us right now, even though the two cases might differ in the most material circumstances. Hume also maintains that the "notions of modesty" to which women must conform are caused by men's addiction to general rules (T 573). And although Hume does not openly condemn these notions, we might suppose that he harbored some private misgivings.⁴⁵

But unlike Hutcheson's fantastick associations, Hume's addictive general rules do not mark a consistent boundary between the unreal or vicious, on the one hand, and the real or virtuous, on the other. For Hume invokes addictive general rules to explain not only judgments and traits we ought to avoid but judgments and traits we ought to embrace as well.⁴⁶

Hume argues, for instance, that our addiction to general rules enables us to distinguish emotionally charged fiction from cold-blooded fact (T 631–632) and to prefer a thousand and one pounds to a thousand (T 141). This addiction also accounts for the compassion we feel for a "person of merit" who "is not dejected by misfortunes" (T 370) and the grief we feel for children murdered in their sleep (T 371). But all of these are, I take it, aspects of a sensible and perhaps even admirable character.

It is, moreover, only because we are addicted to general rules that we come to approve of virtue in rags. We approve of the ineffectual qualities of someone stranded in a desert, that is, only because his qualities resemble qualities of others that are of actual benefit. As Hume writes,

Where a character is, in every respect, fitted to be beneficial to society, the imagination passes easily from the cause to the effect, without considering that there are still some circumstances wanting to render the cause a compleat one. *General rules* create a species of probability, which sometimes influences the judgment, and always the imagination. (T 585)

But Hume gives us no reason to think that we are wrong to judge as virtuous the deserted person who would benefit others were he in society. The fact that this judgment has its origins in a passionate overgeneralization does not, for Hume, necessarily undermine it.

Hume's discussion of racial prejudice adds even more force to the impression that his general rules do not mark a consistent boundary between the mistaken or condemnable, on the one hand, and the correct or praiseworthy, on the other. For while Hume claims that our addiction to general

rules gives rise to prejudice, he goes on to argue that the tendencies that enable us to combat prejudice are also born of general rules.⁴⁷ Hume argues, specifically, that people who manage to free themselves of racial prejudice often do so by recalling all the times in the past that their rash initial judgments led to destructive mistakes. But transferring those past events to the present is yet another example of the addiction to general rules. As Hume writes,

Thus our general rules are in a manner set in opposition to each other....Sometimes the one, sometimes the other prevails, according to the disposition and character of the person....The following of general rules is a very unphilosophical species of probability; and yet 'tis only by following them that we can correct this, and all other unphilosophical probabilities. (T 149–150)

Perhaps, though, the most conspicuous case of Hume's use of general rules to explain a characteristic that ought to be cultivated is his account of how we come to feel disapproval toward our own self-interested acts of injustice. The pressure on Hume to explain this phenomenon is especially great given that his account of justice starts from the claim that "our natural uncultivated ideas of morality, instead of providing a remedy for the partiality of our affections, do rather conform themselves to that partiality, and give it an additional force and influence" (T 489). Hume has claimed, that is, that the original "uncultivated" human constitution is such that people would not disapprove of unjust actions that promote their own interests. How does Hume bridge the explanatory gap between this original partiality and the "cultivated" impartiality of our disapproval of acts that benefit us? He does so, first, by pointing out that unjust acts generally cause more harm than good. This fact, he continues, coupled with our sympathetically grounded disposition to disapprove of that which harms others, leads us to disapprove of unjust acts that do not affect our own interests. But if we have represented to us enough harmful acts of injustice that do not affect our own interests, and if (as we must) we feel disapproval in most of these cases, we will eventually develop the associative habit of conjoining disapproval and injustice. And once this habit develops, we will tend to feel disapproval toward all unjust acts, even those that benefit us. Our tendency to overgeneralize, in other words, causes our disapproval of the injustice of others to become connected in our minds to the injustice we commit ourselves. As Hume puts it,

And tho' this [disapproval of injustice], in the present case, be deriv'd only from contemplating the actions of others, yet we fail not to extend it even to our own actions. The *general rule* reaches beyond those instances, from which it arose.... (T 499)

So according to Hume the addiction to general rules grounds aspects of human life that ought to be embraced, such as the impartiality of our moral obligation to justice, as well as aspects that ought to be resisted, such as the partiality of racial prejudice.⁴⁸ As we have seen, however, Hutcheson's moral theory is built on the belief that correct judgments and admirable traits have different origins from incorrect judgments and despicable traits, that there is an explanatory asymmetry between the praiseworthy and the condemnable. Hume's explanatorily symmetrical accounts thus constitute a rejection of Hutcheson's method of justification and the theological conception of human nature out of which it grew. To the extent that his explanations are successful, then, Hume establishes that Hutcheson was wrong to privilege what is original to our nature, and in so doing he fatally undermines the theologically sanctioned project of trying to trace justificatory borders along explanatory fault lines.

IV. Conclusion

This leaves us with a question, however. How can Hume fund the normative distinction between racial prejudice and the moral obligation to justice? What principled reason can a Humean give for privileging one tendency born of general rules over another tendency also born of general rules? Hutcheson's asymmetrical explanations lent a kind of *prima facie* support to many of our normative distinctions. Hume's symmetrical explanations do not. But what alternative support can a Humean provide?

Hutcheson was certainly disturbed by what he perceived as Hume's inability (or disinclination) to answer this question,⁴⁹ and I do not think this reaction can be entirely explained away by pointing to Hutcheson's theological commitments. For it is not uncommon even among the non-theologically minded to try to subvert a judgment by showing that it has the same origins as some other clearly incorrect judgment.⁵⁰ And this method would seem to be particularly effective if the origins in questions are fantastick associations or addictive general rules. For it would seem that the realization that a judgment results from our propensity to "carry our maxims, beyond those reasons which first induc'd us to establish them" (T 551) would typically undermine our confidence in it. Overgeneralizations do seem, at least on first sight, to involve some kind of mistake. If some overgeneralizations do not involve a mistake, in any event, it seems reasonable to wonder why not.

Now I myself think Hume's conception of human nature can accommodate the normative distinctions morality requires, but I have not argued for that here.⁵¹ What I hope I have made clear is why Humeans—unlike someone, like Hutcheson, working within a certain theological world view—cannot hope to fund normative distinctions simply by pointing to the origins of the sentiments that ground them. Explanatory *ises*, as the Humean understands them, will not alone imply justificatory *oughts*.⁵²

NOTES

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1 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed. revised by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), xvi; hereafter cited as T.

2 David Fate Norton is thus correct in claiming that although Hume was much influenced by Hutcheson, Kemp Smith and his followers exaggerate the extent to which Hume follows Hutcheson's moral sense theory because they (Kemp Smith and his followers) overlook "the vastly different religious perspectives taken by the two philosophers" (David Fate Norton, *David Hume: Common Sense Moralism, Sceptical Metaphysician* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982], 93). As will become clear in section I, I also agree with Norton's more specific claim that "Hutcheson emphasizes...the natural character of our faculties, and then goes on to claim that the natural is that which is the result of a wise and benevolent Providence, or is, more simply, God-given" (Norton, 89). As will become clear in sections II and III, I agree as well with Norton's claim that "Hume, in contrast, seems determined to eschew [Hutcheson's] form of innatism...and to trace to experience all our ideas, including those of duration, on the one hand, and of virtue and vice, on the other" (Norton, 149). See also James Moore, "Hume and Hutcheson," in *Hume and Hume's Connexions*, edited by M.A. Stewart and John P. Wright [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994] for an excellent account of the relationship between Hutcheson and Hume.

3 Francis Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections*, 3rd ed., 1742 (Gainesville FL: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1969); hereafter cited in the text as EP.

4 At T III i 2, Hume seems to accept Hutcheson's view that moral pleasures and pains can be distinguished from other pleasures and pains by their unique phenomenological feel. He writes, for instance, "[A]n inanimate object, and the character or sentiments of any person may, both of them, give satisfaction; but as the satisfaction is different, this keeps our sentiments concerning them from being confounded, and makes us ascribe virtue to one, and not to the other" (T 472). But Hume also suggests a more sophisticated, less "feel-based" manner of distinguishing approval from other pleasures, maintaining that the former arises only when considering a character "in general, without reference to our particular interest" (T 472) and that the approvals that define morality are those we would feel if we considered characters from "a general point of view" (see section II below).

5 Hutcheson suggests that there is no corresponding type of (aesthetic) pain. See Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and*

Virtue, 4th ed. (Westmead: Gregg International, 1969), 70–71; hereafter cited as *Inquiry*.

6 Hutcheson's theory thus bears some affinities with what are today called dispositional or response dependency theories of value. See, e.g., Michael Smith, David Lewis, and Mark Johnston, "Dispositional Theories of Value," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume* (1989).

7 I believe that Hutcheson's conception of association is indebted to Book II, section xxxiii of Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, entitled, "Of the association of ideas." I discuss Locke and Hutcheson's views on association in more detail in "Nature and Association in the Moral Theory of Francis Hutcheson," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 12 (1995): 281–301.

8 Hutcheson tends to call "natural" both explanatorily fundamental passions and passions that are definitive of virtue, beauty, etc.; he tends to do so because he thinks that the two classes of passions are exactly the same. But since the main argument of this paper is that Hume showed that these are not the same I have for clarity's sake eschewed this use of the word 'natural'. So in what follows I will (following Hume) use 'original' to refer to what is explanatorily fundamental. It should be kept in mind, however, that what I (and Hume) call "original" Hutcheson often calls "natural."

Hume's opposition to Hutcheson's using the term 'natural' to describe privileged passions is part of what lies behind his discussion of "Whether we ought to search for these [moral] principles in *nature*" (T 473–476). See also the well-known letter to Hutcheson in which Hume wrote, "I cannot agree to your sense of *Natural*. 'Tis founded on final Causes; which is a Consideration, that appears to me pretty uncertain & unphilosophical. For pray, what is the End of Man? Is he created for Happiness or for Virtue? For this Life or for the next? For himself or for his Maker? Your Definition of *Natural* depends upon solving these Questions, which are endless, & quite wide of my Purpose" (*The Letters of David Hume*, edited by J.Y.T. Grieg, 2 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1932], I, 33).

9 Hutcheson's conception of a pristine original constitution and the corrupting influences of association bears obvious affinities with the Christian doctrine of a pre-lapsarian state and the Fall of Man. Now Hutcheson did not believe, as did many of his Scottish contemporaries, that the Fall had corrupted human nature to such an extent that each of us is wholly unable, on our own, of discerning right from wrong; we could, he thought, each access our original dispositions by warding off fantastick associations. We might wonder, however, about the origins of the tendency to associate itself (as Jon Tresam and Derk Pereboom have both impressed upon me). Isn't that original to human nature as well? Hutcheson himself, so far as I know, never addressed this question, and perhaps we can explain this omission by noting how natural it would have been for Hutcheson and his readers to assume that *something* (along the lines of original sin) had to have wrenched humanity away from its original God-given state. In light of the prevalence of such an assumption, Hume's conception of association and originality stands out in sharp contrast.

10 In the *Essay* Hutcheson uses a pejorative adjective to describe associations and their effects in almost every case. Some examples: 'foolish' (EP 99, 112, 132, 165, 204), 'confused' (EP 23), 'vain' (EP 122, 170), 'strange' (EP 9, 128), and 'wild' (EP 96). He also repeatedly distinguishes results of associations from what is natural (EP 23-24, 94-97, 100-101) and real (EP 95, 122, 167-168). 'Fantastick', however, may be Hutcheson's favorite adjective for describing associations of ideas (EP 103, 112, 136, 156, 164, 168). The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives as the first definition of 'fantastic': "Existing only in imagination; proceeding merely from imagination; fabulous, imaginary, unreal." One of its examples of usage is a sentence from Cudworth's *Intellectual System*: "All those other phantastick Gods, were nothing but Several Personal Names." Hutcheson might also have had in mind Locke's "Of Real and Fantastical Ideas," where Locke writes, "By *real Ideas*, I mean such as have a Foundation in Nature; such as have a Conformity with the real Being, and Existence of Things, or with their Archetypes. *Fantastical* or *Chimerical*, I call such as have no Foundation in Nature, nor have any Conformity with that reality of Being, to which they are tacitly referr'd, as to their Archetypes" (John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, edited by P.H. Nidditch [Oxford: Clarendon, 1975], 372). Locke also says, in "Of the associations of ideas," that those antipathies that are not natural come from our "phancies" or "phancy" (Locke, 397).

Actually, the fact that Hutcheson negatively modifies "associations of ideas" so often might suggest that he thought that some associations are salutary, that he was concerned to distinguish incorrect or false associations from correct or true ones (see note 22). Hutcheson does, after all, speak approvingly of "cultivating...natural Dispositions or Powers" (EP 201) and this seems to suggest the development of positive associations. Now I myself believe that Hutcheson's texts (especially the *Essay*) give strong support to the view that he does think of associations as always negative (as did Locke), that his use of pejorative adjectives to modify the phrase "associations of ideas" is close to being redundant. But however that may be, we are still left with the question of what Hutcheson has in mind when he speaks of "cultivation." How does Hutcheson (or Locke, for that matter) distinguish between correct combinations of ideas (the cultivation of natural dispositions) and incorrect combinations of ideas (fantastick associations)? I don't think Hutcheson (or Locke) has a satisfactory answer to this question; I also think that the realization that Hutcheson (and Locke) didn't have a satisfactory answer was one of Hume's deepest insights.

11 See especially EP 86-166.

12 *Inquiry*, 17.

13 *Inquiry*, 76.

14 *Inquiry*, 76.

15 See also EP 103, where Hutcheson outlines how our "Sense or Desire of *Beauty*" can become corrupted as a result of becoming associated with our "Desire of *Possession* or *Property*."

16 *Inquiry*, 181.

17 See *Inquiry*, 113-115, 163-164, 183-186.

18 See my footnote 6.

19 See EP 106–107; *Inquiry*, xvii, 105, 128–9, 215, 217, 271–273.

20 Perhaps the closest he comes to providing such an argument in his earlier works is EP 199–205. See Moore (34–38) for a discussion of Hutcheson's conception of the "natural" and Hume's response to it.

21 *Inquiry*, 302. See also *Inquiry*, 128, 185; EP xvi–ii, 118, 204–205.

22 Hutcheson's commitment to this move is sometimes more explicit in his later works. In *A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, for instance, he writes: "All such as believe that this universe, and human nature in particular, was formed by the wisdom and counsel of a Deity, must expect to find in our structure and frame some clear evidences, shewing the proper business of mankind, for what course of life, what offices we are furnished by the providence and wisdom of our Creator, and what are the proper means of happiness. We must therefore search accurately into the constitution of our nature, to see what sort of creatures we are; for what purposes nature has formed us; what character God our Creator requires us to maintain.... [F]rom the full knowledge of [the constitution of our nature], we may discover the design, intention, and will of our Creator as to our conduct" (*Collected Works*, vol. 4 [Hildesheim: Olms, 1969], 2–3).

23 See also *Inquiry*, 151–154, 172–173; EP, 75, 105, 140–141, 185–187, 191.

24 I should point out, however, that there are two similar passages, one in the second *Inquiry* (235–237) and one in the *Essay* (9–11), in which Hutcheson seems to allow that some aesthetic and moral associations are beneficial or at least not harmful. Hutcheson says in these passages that associations have had the salutary effect of introducing into our culture notions of honor and shame that have discouraged selfishness and encouraged magnificence and obedience to the state. Associations also account for the esteem with which certain types of "Dress, Equipage, Retinue, Badges of Honour," and ceremony are held (*Inquiry*, 237). And although Hutcheson is clear that there is no natural connection between these conventions and the affections they have been taken to represent, he still thinks that it is a mistake to eschew the conventions completely, as evidenced by his criticism of the "recluse Philosophers" who pride themselves for "despising these external Shews" (*Inquiry*, 237). That Hutcheson thinks we ought to heed these conventions, however, should not be taken as an endorsement of associations of ideas. Rather, he thinks it is just a brute fact that most people will retain the associations that give rise to conventions, and that it is consequently necessary to heed the conventions in order to influence humanity for its own benefit. "Nor is it in vain," he writes, "that the wisest and greatest Men regard these things; for however it may concern them to break such Associations in their own Minds, yet, since the bulk of Mankind will retain them, they must comply with their Sentiments and Humours in things innocent, as they expect the *publick Esteem*, which is generally necessary to enable Men to serve the Publick" (EP 10). The "recluse philosophers" who refuse to play the game of convention will never be able to serve the public, while the "wisest and greatest," who do play the game, will be able to serve them. That is not to say, however, that the wisest and greatest will sanguinely allow themselves to retain the associations that make the game possible. They

may very well try to break them off in their own minds, while realizing still that there are natural or non-associative reasons for playing the game. We can infer, I believe, that Hutcheson thinks that if we were all in our natural or original state, we would not need conventions for a smooth-running benevolent society. But the corrupt state of human nature—the fact that so many of us are in the grip of associations of ideas—makes some conventions necessary. Hutcheson also maintains that “all our *Language* and much of our *Memory*...beside many other valuable *Powers* and *Arts*” depend on associations of ideas (EP 11). But he suggests that these uses of association are not counterproductive only because (or to the extent that) they do not wrench our passions out of their original shape. We ought to allow such associations, that is, only if we can still “separate Ideas when it may be useful for us to do so” (EP 11).

25 I discuss this in greater detail in my “Nature and Association in the Moral Theory of Francis Hutcheson.”

26 Annette Baier (in *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991]) and Christine Korsgaard (in “The Sources of Normativity,” in *The Tanner Lectures* [Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994]) both claim to find in Hume a reflexivity test of normativity, according to which the essence of Humean normativity is the ability to survive reflection (both in the sense of sustained conscious attention and in the sense of one's view being turned on oneself). One of the crucial texts for Baier and Korsgaard's reflexivity readings is T 619, where Hume writes, “But this sense [of morals] must certainly acquire new force, when reflecting on itself, it approves of those principles, from when it is deriv'd, and finds nothing but what is great and good in its rise and origin.” I discuss Baier and Korsgaard's Humean reflexivity readings in my “A Philosopher in his Closet: Reflexivity and Justification in Hume's Moral Theory,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* (forthcoming).

27 John Gay's use of association in his “Dissertation concerning the Fundamental Principle and immediate Criterion of Virtue” marks an interesting transition between Hutcheson and Hume, since Gay (like Hutcheson) privileges the original or pre-associative, but also sketches in (like Hume) how association can explain many of the phenomena Hutcheson attributes to a pre-associative moral sense.

28 For discussion of the authorship of the *Abstract*, see John O. Nelson, “The Authorship of the *Abstract* Revisited,” *Hume Studies* 17.1 (1991): 83–86; Jeff Broome, “On the Authorship of the *Abstract*,” *Hume Studies* 18.1 (1992): 95–104; David Fate Norton, “More Evidence that Hume Wrote the *Abstract*,” *Hume Studies* 19.1 (1993): 217–222; David Raynor, “The Authorship of the *Abstract* Revisited,” *Hume Studies* 19.1 (1993): 213–216.

29 John Passmore, *Hume's Intentions* (London: Duckworth, 1980), 105.

30 I should say that the claims I make in the remainder of this paper apply principally to the *Treatise* and not necessarily to Hume's *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, 1975). I say this because it seems clear to me that in section V of the *Enquiry* Hume sounds

much more like Hutcheson than he does in the *Treatise*, especially in his resistance to analyzing benevolence into the more fundamental principle of sympathy (EPM 219–220) and in his suggestion of an explanatory asymmetry between cruelty and benevolence (EPM 226–227). (See Selby-Bigge's "Editor's Introduction," *Inquiry*, xxiii–xxvii for a discussion of the Hutchesonian character of these passages.) I think, however, that even the Hume of the *Enquiry* would reject the claim that benevolence earns justificatory privilege simply because it is unanalyzable, that even the Hume of the *Enquiry* would say that benevolence's privilege has to be earned in some other way—perhaps as a result of its helping us bear our own survey or because it promotes ultimate (but not necessarily original) ends. However that may be, though, I would still maintain that the Hutchesonian character of the *Enquiry* does not undermine my reading of the *Treatise*. I think, that is, that the *Enquiry* is not merely a cleaned-up version of the *Treatise* but in certain ways a substantially different (and philosophically less ambitious) work.

31 Hutcheson's theory of justice is developed for the most part in works (such as *A System of Moral Philosophy*) published after Hume wrote the *Treatise*, so we should not suppose that Hume meant to attack Hutcheson's views on justice when he wrote this passage (although Hutcheson's discussion of rights in the *Inquiry* contains the seeds of his theory of justice). I think it is clear, however, that Hume's account of justice does constitute an attack on the picture of human nature that Hutcheson's moral theory presupposes (see also Hume's *Letters*, 33). For while Hutcheson maintains that we originally approve of the motive to benefit humanity as a whole, Hume argues that the possibility of such a motive conflicts with human psychology. When we approve of someone's motives, therefore, we must be approving of motives that are not completely universal or impartial. Of course Hume also believes that we will sympathize with—and so tend to approve of that which benefits—anyone whose plight is "brought near to us, and represented in lively colours" (T 481). But the fact that we can sympathize with any particular person at a given time does not imply that we can ever sympathize with all people at the same time.

32 See Miriam McCormick, "Hume on Natural Belief and Original Principles," *Hume Studies* 19.1 (1993): 103–116, for a very helpful discussion of Hume's use of the terms "natural" and "original." McCormick says that for Hume three "clearly original principles...are selfishness, sympathy, and the propensity to form habits" (109). I agree that the latter two are original for Hume in that they are for him unexplained explainers (as are lust and parental affection, as I note above). But for the purposes of elucidating the difference between Hutcheson and Hume I am calling "original" only those *passions* that are unexplained explainers, not the associative habitual mechanisms that give rise to unoriginal passions. To proceed in this way is to work within Hutcheson's framework, according to which original passions are privileged over unoriginal ones. What Hutcheson never addresses, however, is why original passions ought to be privileged over the original "propensity to form habits." It is difficult to see, though, how Hutcheson could have adequately answered this concern, since there are bad habits as well as good ones, and this would seem to undermine entirely the idea of tying privilege to originality.

33 Although at T 486 Hume speaks of the "passions of lust and natural affection" as being the "first and original principle of human society," he says earlier (as Norton has pointed out to me) that lust is "a natural impulse or instinct" that *gives rise* to passions (T 439), suggesting that he might have thought that lust is not a passion itself. It seems, that is, that Hume may not have been entirely clear about how or whether to distinguish sexual impulses from passions (although I'm not sure that even the passage at T 439 should be taken to imply any meaningful distinction between the two). What is crucial for our purposes, in any event, is only to locate what for Hume is explanatorily fundamental, or, as he puts it, "perfectly unaccountable" (T 439).

34 See also "Of the obligation of promises," where Hume writes, "Men being naturally selfish, or endow'd only with a confin'd generosity, they are not easily induc'd to perform any action for the interest of strangers, except with a view to some reciprocal advantage, which they had no hope of obtaining but by such a performance....Were we, therefore, to follow the natural course of our passions and inclinations, we shou'd perform but few actions for the advantage of others, from disinterested views; because we are naturally very limited in our kindness and affection...." (T 519).

35 Hutcheson, for instance, writes, "Were we to strike a *Medium* of the several Passions and Affections, as they appear in the whole Species of Mankind, to conclude thence what has been the natural Ballance previously to any Change made by Custom and habit, which we see casts the Ballance to either side, we should perhaps find the *Medium* of the publick Affections not very far from a sufficient *Counterballance* to the *Medium* of the Selfish; and consequently the *Overballance* on either side in particular Characters, is not to be looked upon as the *original Constitution*, but as the *accidental Effect* of Custom, Habits, or Associations of Ideas, or other preternatural Causes...." (EP 203).

36 Actually, our "partiality" or "limited generosity" alone, according to Hume, would still not give rise to justice. There must also obtain certain "outward circumstances" (T 486 ff.). The principle element of these "circumstances" is that there is a scarcity of certain universally desired goods and that these goods can be taken from one person and transferred to another.

37 Hume's account "Of the rules, which determine property" is also interesting in this regard (T 501-513). For in that section, Hume develops two parallel explanations of how property rules develop. In the main body of the text he derives these rules from their tendency to benefit society. But in the extensive footnotes to the section (longer than the main body itself) Hume derives the rules from associative tendencies that have no necessary relation to public utility. He writes, "Thus, in the present case, there are, no doubt, motives of public interest for most of the rules, which determine property; but still I suspect, that these rules are principally fix'd by the imagination, or the more frivolous properties of our thought and conception" (T 504). (But see EPM 192 ff.)

38 Especially if we read only the first part of Book III of the *Treatise*. Moore has suggested that Hume wrote this part of the *Treatise* in response to Hutcheson's criticisms of an earlier draft (Moore, 39). This might at least partly explain the Hutchesonian flavor of these sections.

39 But see Moore, 40–41.

40 As McCormick points out, sympathy is for Hume original to human nature (see note 29). But sympathy cannot fill the justificatory role in Hume's philosophy that the benevolent moral sense does in Hutcheson's. For Humean sympathy can give rise to condemnable passions (e.g., anger, vengeance, the desire to drink to excess) as naturally as it can give rise to praiseworthy ones. Our capacity to sympathize, moreover, varies with our past experience in a way that original Hutchesonian approval of benevolence does not (see Páll S. Árdal, *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966], 45). Indeed, it is just sympathy's sensitivity to the limits of experience that explains the variable partiality for which the general point of view must correct (T 581; see below). As Moore writes, "Hutcheson found no place for sympathy in his system: 'sympathy could never account for that immediate ardour of love and good-will which breaks forth toward any character represented to us as eminent in moral excellence' (*System* I, p. 48)" (Moore 35). It is perhaps also significant that Hume abandons his sympathy-based explanations in just that section (EPM V) in which he sounds the most like Hutcheson.

41 Judgments in accord with Hume's general point of view differ not only in origin but also in content from judgments in accord with Hutcheson's natural moral sense. For Hutcheson's moral sense leads us to approve of actions intended to promote the happiness of humanity as a whole, but Hume's general point of view leads us to approve of traits beneficial only to those in the more or less immediate vicinity of the bearer of the trait (see T 582–584). And a trait that benefits those in the more or less immediate vicinity could conceivably harm, or at least not help, humanity overall. (For further discussion, see Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, "On Why Hume's 'General Point of View' Isn't Ideal—and Shouldn't Be," *Social Philosophy & Policy* 11.1 [1994].) Hume also maintains, moreover, that we approve not only of traits that are useful to others but also of traits that are useful to the bearer himself, as well as of traits that are immediately agreeable to others or to the bearer. But this four-part taxonomy cannot be reduced to the impartial benevolence that Hutcheson claims characterizes those things we naturally approve of. (For further discussion see Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, "Hume and the Bauhaus Theory of Ethics," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* [forthcoming]) As Hume wrote in a letter to Hutcheson, "Were Benevolence the only Virtue no Characters cou'd be mixt, but wou'd depend entirely on their Degrees of Benevolence" (*Letters of David Hume*, I, 34). In another letter he wrote, "I always thought you limited too much your Ideas of Virtue" (I, 47).

42 See T 631–632, 141, 293, 309, 362, 371, 374, 499, 531, 551, 585, 598. See also EPM 207.

43 See also T 293.

44 Sometimes when Hume speaks of general rules he is referring not to the associative tendency to overgeneralize (which is what I am concerned with here) but rather to explicit laws or conventions. Hume tends not to italicize 'general rules' when he is speaking of these explicit laws or conventions (an exception to this is T 110 and possibly T 309), and it is usually fairly clear from

the context whether he is discussing explicit law or the associative tendency to overgeneralize. See, for instance, T 531–532, where Hume distinguishes the results of “general and universal rules” from motives born of “general rules.” (See also T 502, 514, 562.)

45 See also T 309.

46 Hume also uses our addiction to general rules to explain tendencies that are not clearly praiseworthy or condemnable, such as our tendency to feel embarrassed for foolish people who do not themselves realize that they are acting foolishly (T 371) and our tendency to be initially suspicious of all expressions of pride (T 598).

47 See also T 551–552, where Hume suggests that resistance to tyrants is born of general rules no less than obedience.

48 See Thomas K. Hearn, Jr.'s “‘General Rules’ in Hume’s *Treatise*,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 8.4 [1970]: 405–422) for a valuable discussion of these matters (see also Hearn’s “General Rules and the Moral Sentiments in Hume’s *Treatise*,” *Review of Metaphysics* 30.1 [1976]: 57–77). Hearn rightly distinguishes between “reflective” general rules (which are the main focus of his article) and those that arise as a result of our unreflective “generalizing propensity” (which I focus on more here). I would suggest, however, that Hearn does not take adequate notice of the fact that Hume does not condemn *all* the unreflective or “addictive” general rules. (Hearn acknowledges [422] one point [T 585] at which Hume does not regard the generalizing propensity as a source of error, but Hearn then argues that even at this point Hume allows the resulting unreflective general rule only because it is endorsed by a reflective general rule.) The distinction between general rules we ought to live by and those we ought to avoid does not, that is, track the distinction between reflective and unreflective general rules.

49 After seeing an early draft of Hume’s *Treatise*, Hutcheson complained that it wanted “a certain Warmth in the Cause of Virtue” (*The Letters of David Hume*, I, 32).

50 As Hume writes when discussing general rules’ role in both the promotion and destruction of racial prejudice: “Mean while *the sceptics may here have the pleasure of observing a new and signal contradiction in our reason, and of seeing all philosophy ready to be subverted by a principle of human nature, and again sav’d by a new direction of the very same principle*” (T 150, my italics). (See Baier [57–58] for an enlightening discussion of “the sceptics’ pleasure.”)

51 I think Baier’s position, that for Hume “*Successful reflexivity is normativity*” (Baier, 99–100 *passim*.), is the most ambitious and important recent attempt to construct a principled Humean method for funding normative distinctions. In the end, however, I am more convinced by David Owen’s claim (perhaps not completely incompatible with Baier’s) that for Hume certain practices ought to be privileged because they are “more pleasant and useful to ourselves and others” (David Owen, “Philosophy and the Good Life,” *Dialogue*, forthcoming). Korsgaard maintains that Hume cannot accommodate the normative distinctions morality requires. She argues, in particular, that one who believed that her moral obligation to justice is born of general rules would

lose normative confidence in that obligation. (I argue against Korsgaard's view in "A Philosopher in his Closet: Reflexivity and Justification in Hume's Moral Theory.")

52 I do not mean to imply that Hume intended the is-ought passage to be an attack on Hutcheson. Indeed, I think Martin may be right in her claim that at T 469 "Hume is simply repeating Hutcheson's main argument against the moral rationalists" (Marie A. Martin, "Hutcheson and Hume on Morality," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 8 [1991]: 278). My loose adaptation of Hume's is-ought passage is meant only to point to how Hume's associative account of morality brings into sharp focus a distinction Hutcheson's conception of human nature obscured, namely, the distinction between explanation and justification.

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