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# Hume's Difficulty with the Virtue of Honesty

RACHEL COHON

In Book III, Part ii of the *Treatise* Hume makes the following claims about the virtue of equity, or honesty with respect to property:

...it may be establish'd as an undoubted maxim, *that no action can be virtuous, or morally good, unless there be in human nature some motive to produce it, distinct from the sense of its morality.* (T 479)<sup>1</sup>

'Tis requisite, then, to find some motive to acts of justice and honesty, distinct from our regard to the honesty; and in this lies the great difficulty. (T 480)

...we have no real or universal motive<sup>2</sup> for observing the laws of equity, but the very equity and merit of that observance; and as no action can be equitable or meritorious, where it cannot arise from some separate motive, there is here an evident sophistry and reasoning in a circle. Unless, therefore, we will allow, that nature has establish'd a sophistry, and render'd it necessary and unavoidable, we must allow, that the sense of justice and injustice is not deriv'd from nature, but arises artificially, tho' necessarily from education, and human conventions. (T 483)

Although our topic is honesty, we should note that later Hume offers an intentionally parallel claim about the virtue of fidelity to promises:

Now 'tis evident we have no motive leading us to the performance of promises, distinct from a sense of duty. If we thought, that promises had no moral obligation, we never shou'd feel any inclination to observe them...it follows, that fidelity is no natural virtue, and that promises have no force, antecedent to human conventions. (T 518-519)<sup>3</sup>

## The Difficulty

What we seem to see here is a set of contradictory claims:

1. Honesty is a virtue. (This is implicit, since Hume's intent in discussing honesty at all is to show that "some virtues...produce pleasure and approbation by means of an artifice" [T 477].)
2. For every virtue there is in human nature some nonmoral motive—some motive distinct from moral approval and disapproval (the "sense of virtue" or the "sense of duty")—that characteristically motivates actions expressive of that virtue and that, by eliciting our approval, renders virtuous the actions so motivated.
3. There is no morally approved, virtue-imparting, nonmoral motive of honest action. The only approved, reliable motive of honest action that we can find is a moral one, the sense of virtue or "regard to the honesty" of the actions.

(2) and (3) together imply the negation of (1). As Hume points out, the three propositions also jointly generate a vicious definitional circle, discussed below. But Hume does not conclude from this that (1) is false—that honesty is not a virtue. Instead, he somehow infers from these claims that honesty is artificial (the product of human invention), not natural.

Since Hume asserts (2) and (3) in close proximity, one might well ask how he ultimately reconciles these incompatible claims. Since Hume introduces them in the course of providing "a short, and, I hope, convincing argument" that honesty is one of the "virtues that produce pleasure and approbation by means of an artifice or contrivance, which arises from the circumstances and necessities of mankind" (T 477), one might ask how the artificiality of honesty is supposed to follow from these mutually inconsistent claims. And since Hume himself draws dramatic attention to the circle or "sophistry," one might expect him to tell us how that may be avoided. The answers to these questions do not leap easily from the text. How does Hume solve his "great difficulty" with the virtue of honesty?

In what follows I offer an interpretation that answers these questions. According to it, the circle and the contradiction result, on Hume's view, from

a misapplication of some of our ordinary moral concepts; and the moral sentiment plays a motivating role in the virtue of honesty. Then I distinguish my interpretation from a family of interpretations that see a much more prominent role in the text for redirected interest, and argue that my interpretation has important interpretive and philosophical advantages.

Hume seems right to assume (1). Honesty with respect to property, the only kind of honesty that concerns him here, is an ethically good character trait—a virtue.

Hume's considerations in favor of (2) are fairly persuasive. (2) follows from Hume's understanding of what a virtue is. A virtue is some sort of admirable psychological state or disposition that motivates action. An analysis of a particular virtue, such as benevolence or justice, must tell us what the relevant psychological state or disposition is that wholly or partly constitutes the virtue. For example, for benevolence it is a concern (or the disposition to feel concern) for the well-being of others. On Hume's sentiment-based meta-ethic, a virtue is a trait of character which, when contemplated impartially and from a commonly-accessible perspective, gives to the observer a particular kind of pleasure called approbation (approval); a vice gives the observer a kind of uneasiness, disapprobation (disapproval). What principally elicits approval and disapproval, Hume says, is the motivating sentiment of the person under evaluation, and actions elicit approval and disapproval only derivatively (T 477-478). Consequently, there must be some motivating sentiment distinct from moral approval or disapproval to serve as the object of approval when a trait is designated a virtue. We may call this the nonmoral, approved motive. According to (2), every virtue consists, at least in part, of a characteristic nonmoral, approved motive.

We should clarify Hume's confusing uses of the term 'natural.' On the one hand, he contrasts the natural with the artificial (the product of human invention). But he uses the term in two other ways as well. "In the following discourse *natural* is also opposed sometimes to *civil*, sometimes to *moral*...." (T 475, footnote). On topics where Hume evidently is using 'natural' to mark what is not moral, as in his discussion of the different kinds of sentiments, I say nonmoral.<sup>4</sup>

"But may not the sense of morality or duty produce an action, without any other motive?" (T 479). Hume considers whether the production of a virtuous action solely by the sense of duty, which is a moral motive, would be a counterexample to (2). On Hume's theory, our duties are the actions typically prompted by virtuous motivating sentiments that are common in human nature, motives the absence of which we disapprove. Actions are identified as duties in light of the fact that they are the standard products of such sentiments. We condemn the failure to perform these actions (such as caring for one's children) solely because we understand the omission as evidence that the agent lacks the requisite motive (love of his children). My

duties are actions that would be prompted by virtuous motives in me if I had such motives; if I fail to perform them, this indicates a regrettable deficiency in me of the motivating sentiment that constitutes the virtue in question (and perhaps even the presence of vice). If I lack a virtuous motive which I know it would be better to have, I might feel ashamed and be moved to do the deeds it typically motivates anyway, for another reason: a desire either to correct in myself, or to conceal from myself, my own motivational deficiency. This, for Hume, is motivation by the sense of duty alone. Clearly, in the case of honesty (or any particular virtue), there must be an approved motive definitive of honest action present in people in the first place, before someone who lacks that motive can identify what she is missing that an honest person has and regret her lack of it. And there would also need to be an approved motive in honest people in order for the deficient individual to determine what action an honest person would be moved to do (what her duty is), before she can do it solely from a sense of duty. The existence of the sense of duty, on Hume's theory, depends upon the existence of some approved motive of honest action in the generality of honest people, and so the sense of duty cannot *be* that approved motive. Thus the existence of the motive of duty is no threat to (2), but actually supports it.

Hume also has plausible things to say in favor of (3), that there is no approved nonmoral motive of honest actions. He canvasses the nonmoral motives people might have for repaying a loan in various circumstances in which this would be the honest thing to do, such as when the loan is to be kept secret, or when it is owed to a "miser," or a "profligate debauchee," attempting to find some morally approved motive in light of which each such action would be shown to manifest the virtue of honesty (T 479-483). Virtue theorist that he is, Hume expects to find some single type of sentiment that constitutes the character trait of honesty and reliably motivates honest action, and, given (2), the sentiment should be distinct from moral approval and disapproval. The only candidates available seem to be the debtor's private interest, the public interest, the love of mankind as such, and private benevolence (the desire for the good of the creditor). Each of these fails to motivate the approved action under some circumstances in which we would deem the action honest, and so none could be the motive constitutive of the virtue of honesty.<sup>5</sup> For example, private benevolence will not move me to repay a fortune I borrowed from a profligate debauchee, who will only use the wealth for self-destructive dissipation; yet insofar as I am honest, I will be moved to repay it nonetheless, and we would count it honest to do so. Furthermore, sometimes these motives simply do not fit the virtue as we find it. Thus, "men, in the ordinary conduct of life, look not so far as the public interest, when they pay their creditors...and abstain from theft, and robbery, and injustice of every kind. That is a motive too remote and too sublime..." (T 481). Furthermore, in practice, the reason or motive people cite for repaying

a loan and other honest acts is simply their "regard to justice, and abhorrence of villainy and knavery" (T 479), that is, their sense of morality.

The circle arises quite directly from (2) and (3). Moral approval of an action is elicited by the presence of a virtue-imparting motive; this is what makes actions of this type virtuous at all. So, the approval cannot be the virtue-imparting motive. Yet in the case of honest action, it is. The person who has the virtue of honesty repays loans and refrains from theft out of approval of honest behavior and disapproval of dishonest behavior. Thus, to behave honestly is to do certain sorts of outward acts (those we recognize as required by honesty) from an honest motive, a motive definitive of the virtue and productive of approval; but the only honest motive has turned out to be approval of honest action. So, an honest action is an action motivated by approval of honest action. And that is *all* it in fact is. This is a viciously circular definition, since it defines honest action in terms of honest action and gives us no other way to identify it. The motive of honest action is also identified only circularly: the motive of honest action is approval of honest action, which in turn is approval of action motivated by the motive of honest action. We can never say what the approval is approval *of*. We have a useless definition both of honest action and of the motive of honest action, but a useless definition that seems to be the only correct one. This is seriously paradoxical.

It is noteworthy that it does not resolve the paradox to say that honesty is a social invention. It makes no more sense that a product of human convention should be capable only of a viciously circular definition than that a product of nature should be so. A product of human ingenuity cannot be such that its only correct definition is one that is no definition at all.

## Overview of the Solution

Here is my interpretation. Hume himself accepts (1), that honesty is a virtue. (2), the motivational requirement on virtue, is something that on Hume's view we commonly presuppose but not something Hume himself endorses, on reflection, with respect to all the virtues. Instead, he holds a weaker thesis, that there must be an approved motive constituting any virtue, but it need not be a nonmoral one and that, in the right social conditions, actions themselves can be approved without regard to how they were motivated. At the same time, Hume accepts and defends (3), that there is no nonmoral motive of honest action of which we approve. That is how Hume avoids the contradiction. In the end Hume's view is that our ordinary conception of a virtue requires the existence of a nonmoral motive of which we approve and which makes virtuous the actions so motivated. (2) is a thesis of common sense. Honesty is not a virtue in this sense. But honesty is a virtue in the sense that matters for Hume: it is a trait of which we approve when we

contemplate it in general and from a common point of view. And honesty is a trait of character, for there is an approved and characteristic motive of honest action as well; it simply is not a nonmoral one. The difficulties arise in part because we mistake honesty for a natural virtue and (2) does hold for the natural virtues (such as benevolence, gratitude, and parental attentiveness). Thus, for Hume, honesty is a virtue in roughly the sense in which an artificial leg is a leg. It is a virtue because it functions as a virtue. But if we take it for a natural virtue we are mistaken, just as we are mistaken if we take a well-functioning artificial leg for a natural leg. It is because we *take* honesty to be a virtue of the commonsensical sort, a natural virtue, that the contradiction and the circle arise. They are the consequence of conjoining our over-generalized concept of a virtue with our actual motives for and reactions to honesty. Indeed, the presence of a “sophistry” buried just below the surface of our network of concepts and sentiments is a revealing clue that our natural conception of virtue has been grafted intentionally onto a set of facts and sentiments that it does not fit. The contradiction and vicious circle show that our presuppositions could not all have arisen from experience, but must somewhere include supposed ideas that represent no impression, and so are nothing.<sup>6</sup> It further suggests that human social inventiveness has been at work to obfuscate matters, albeit (as it turns out) for a good purpose. Thus the illogical relations of these concepts lead Hume to classify material honesty as artificial in the first place. The artifice does not remove the logical difficulties, but rather is posited to explain why they are there. The contradiction and the circle, however, are not actually instantiated in the world, even though in our concepts we may unknowingly be committed to them.<sup>7</sup>

### The First Stage: Redirected Interest

It is well known that Hume thinks honesty is an artificial virtue and property is a human social invention. On the interpretation that I propose, here is what this inventing comes to. Human beings need to associate with one another for cooperative production, for mutual aid, and for division of labor (call these economic advantages), as well as for companionship and the other benefits of a social life. However, basic selfishness coupled with “confined generosity,” under conditions of moderate scarcity, lead to conflict over material goods, which are easily taken and transported. It is not only my selfishness which will lead me to use force or stealth to make off with the fruits of your labor or the whole of our joint product. My partiality to my own friends and family will lead to the same sort of behavior. If this sort of behavior goes unchecked, our cooperative arrangements will soon disintegrate, leaving every individual much the worse off for lack of the economic and emotional advantages of society. So our interests dictate that we restrain our greed and partiality in some way, so as to be better served in the long run. We need to

attach material goods to persons in such a way that each person can count on controlling certain goods undisturbed. Then it will be profitable to have regular social interactions with others, such as cooperative production and exchange of goods, and a social structure can then achieve stability. Hence, greed (specifically) and self-interest (more broadly) move us to make declarations of the following form: I will refrain from taking or using the goods now in your possession, provided you will refrain from taking or using the goods in my possession. Individuals announce such conditional intentions to one another, and each abstains from the designated goods on condition that the others behave similarly. This is the invention of property. Such practices gradually catch on among larger numbers of people. They are kept in a fragile balance entirely by voluntary compliance, as the only penalty or bad consequence of taking possession of the goods reserved to another is the collapse of the practice and the return to a "free for all" condition, or perhaps ostracism of the violator from the community of cooperators. Participants learn by trial and error that if they are so short-sighted as to violate the rule of "mine and thine," others will soon disregard the rule as well and the society will disintegrate, the security and prosperity provided by it being quickly lost. Such purely voluntary cooperative arrangements easily fall apart when anyone realizes that some others are not abiding by the arrangement. Since these conventions take shape at first in small, face-to-face groups of rather low material productivity, it is fairly obvious when anyone violates the rules. This gives us the first temporal stage: greed and broader self-interest induce us to invent rules attaching goods to individuals, and experience with the fragility of small societies teaches us that it is in our interest to conform to these rules. Thus "the *natural* obligation to justice, viz. interest, has been fully explain'd" (T 498).<sup>8</sup> This much is fairly uncontroversial.

Successful cooperative groups then grow larger and more prosperous, using the economic advantages of society to improve their material productivity. In more stable and more anonymous groups of this kind, where there are more goods available to tempt people, self-interest alone will not always reliably motivate conformity to the rules of property; some people are likely to be moved by greed to violate the rules from time to time. This is likely to happen whether or not it actually is in anyone's long-term interest to violate, because at times some people will find the attractions of such behavior stronger than any calm promptings of long-term self-interest.<sup>9</sup> This is a vulnerable stage in human social development. What is needed is a further motive for people to comply with the rules of ownership.

### **The Second Stage: The Motive of Augmented Moral Sentiment**

Adults living in such a society (which might well lack any formal government), especially parents, leaders, and anyone else with influence over

the feelings of others, have various motives for attempting to create such a further motive in others to follow the rules of property, and they have a number of raw materials in the natural sentiments from which they can fashion a further motive. It is in the interest of each person that others be disposed to conform quite strictly to the rules of property. This is what gives stability to society and insures that its shared advantages come into being. This consideration alone will move parents and politicians to instruct other people to follow the rules very strictly (whether or not they are disposed to adhere strictly themselves), in the hope of making those others useful to themselves. Furthermore, parents naturally love their children and want them to fare well, and only those people known to be disposed to honor property rights will be welcomed into society and commerce; so parents will wish to train their children to be scrupulous about property. Now, everyone, even the young people themselves (once it is pointed out to them), can recognize that conformity to the rules of property makes possible the persistence of the social arrangement that benefits all. The mechanism of sympathy will thus naturally lead every member of society to feel approval for rule-following behavior within the system of property that is in place, given the happiness that system yields and the misery it prevents. So the initial moral evaluation, approval of acting in accordance with the rules of property, or of the (bare) disposition to do so, is an evaluation made naturally by all who reflect on society and on the preserving role of behavior that conforms to the rules of property. This is an evaluation of actions, not of any character trait consisting of a motivating sentiment.<sup>10</sup> At this point parents and politicians engage in a further “artifice” which “extend[s] the natural sentiments beyond their original bounds” (T 500): they convert their charges’ approval of rule-following acts, which arose naturally upon reflection about the convention of property, into a motivating sentiment. Through “custom and education” (T 500) they turn the moral disapproval of violations of the rules into a deeply-rooted abhorrence of violation, a horror of “villainy and knavery” too strong and too visceral to be readily overcome in any particular instance by greed or general self-interest. This enhanced moral sentiment has motivating power. In Hume’s words,

the sense of morality...is...augmented by a new *artifice*, and...the public instructions of politicians, and the private education of parents, contribute to the giving us a sense of honour and duty in the strict regulation of our actions with regard to the properties of others. (T 533-534)<sup>11</sup>

This change occurs within the constraints of Hume’s system of the passions, which we can draw upon to reconstruct its progression. According to Hume’s theory of the will, the motivating passions fall into two classes: natural impulses or instincts, which are incapable of further analysis (T 439), and affections that arise from good and evil (pain and pleasure) either present

or in prospect (T 438). The instincts include "the desire of punishment to our enemies, and of happiness to our friends; hunger, lust, and a few other bodily appetites" (T 439), and perhaps also "the love of life, and kindness to children" (T 417). Certainly no motive to acts of loan-repayment and the like is instinctual. The passions that arise from (immediate or predicted) good and evil include the direct passions of desire, aversion, hope, fear, joy, and sorrow, and the indirect passions of pride, humility, love, and hatred. Pride and humility do not directly move us to act, but they enhance our desire for or aversion to the objects of which we are proud or ashamed (and our hope or fear of acquiring them, joy or sorrow in having them), and so increase the motivational power of these direct passions (T 439). An actual or prospective pleasure or pain of any sort, including those of moral approval or disapproval, can, under the right circumstances, give rise to one of these motivating direct passions. Now, the prospect of moral approval by itself is sometimes too weak to cause a desire in us sufficiently strong to move us to act in a way that will give us that pleasure, especially when there are personal costs to the behavior.<sup>12</sup> But desires, aversions, and other motivating passions can be strengthened in various ways. Two occurrent passions in the mind "readily mingle and unite," and "[t]he predominant passion converts [the inferior] into itself" (T 420). We have seen that pride and humility in particular strengthen the motivating direct passions. Since actions conforming to or violating the rules of property are an independent source of pleasure and pain related to the agent by cause and effect, people will naturally be proud of their conforming actions and ashamed of their violations (T 288, 303), which strengthens the desire to do the one and aversion to doing the other. In addition, through sympathy the "opinion of another...will cause an idea of good or evil to have an influence upon us, which wou'd otherwise have been entirely neglected" (T 427). Specifically in the context of property, in "contemplating the [unjust] actions of others" even toward victims who are distant from us, "we partake of [the victims'] uneasiness by *sympathy*" and so disapprove their actions. Because we are addicted to general rules, and because we also partake by sympathy in the attitudes of others toward ourselves, we come to disapprove "our own actions" in violation of the rules of property as well (T 499). Also, custom imparts a "tendency or inclination" toward an object (T 422) and "bends [the spirits] more strongly to [habitual] action" (T 424); while eloquence can stimulate the imagination, giving motivational force to ideas that otherwise "may have but a feeble influence either on the will or the affections" (T 427). Politicians add their eloquence in "publick praise and blame" and parents add the force of "custom and education" (T 500). So pride and humility, custom, and eloquence strengthen our desire for and hope of the approval, and aversion to and fear of the disapproval, we will feel in keeping or violating the rules of property, making these direct passions into sentiments that have a powerful influence on our behavior.

This alteration of the psychology of the young parallels the indoctrination of young girls that occurs after the invention of the artificial virtues of feminine chastity and modesty.<sup>13</sup> In order for children to be cared for adequately, Hume thinks, society needs husbands to be confident that their wives' children are their own, and so, extremely confident that their wives are perfectly faithful. But sexual temptation, like the temptation to take the property of others, can be very great. Informal penalties are available in the form of "bad fame," and to this end people "attach a peculiar degree of shame" to unchaste acts and "bestow proportionable praises" on chastity; but this is not sufficient to motivate the exceptionless chastity of wives. However, persons who have an interest in the chastity of women disapprove of any violation of conjugal duty, and others "are carried along with the stream," including, presumably, women and girls themselves. And then, "[e]ducation takes possession of the ductile minds of the fair sex in their infancy," strengthening young girls' mere disapproval of actions that contravene a socially useful practice to make it a motivating passion: a deep-seated "backwardness and dread" at the prospect of a sexual liaison (T 572), and a tendency (shared with everyone else) to be shocked by any feminine "lewdness." Although Hume gives little description of this feeling, the modest woman's "repugnance to all expressions, and postures, and liberties, that have an immediate relation to that enjoyment" (T 572) seems to involve finding sexual advances demeaning and regarding (nonmarital) sex as shameful. This feeling is strong enough so that the temptations to pleasure cannot normally overcome it, and it persists even past the childbearing years, when the connection to social utility is lost. Indeed, it is directed toward each and every unchaste act, without exception, regardless of the act's social utility or risk to reputation. This psychological change is necessary if society is to reap the rewards, Hume seems to think. If wives merely regard extramarital affairs as generally socially harmful, this attitude will not give their husbands sufficient confidence of paternity. For that, the wife must have a stable character trait, preferably in the form of a visceral motivating attitude. Such a thing cannot evaporate once the woman passes childbearing age. Similarly with honesty: it will not be enough for the people to think that violation of the rules of property is generally socially harmful. For of course it will not be so in every instance, and even when it is, it may sometimes not seem so because its ill effects are so indirect. To secure the stability of our social arrangements and the rewards to be had therefrom, we need people who are strict and scrupulous in following the rules of property, whether or not they see the social utility of it on each occasion and even in the face of personal disadvantage. So we need a character trait—for Hume, a separate feeling or disposition to feel—that governs action consistently and without significant agitation in the soul, in part as the result of custom (T 418-419). Parents teach their children

to regard the observance of those rules, by which society is maintain'd, as worthy and honourable, and their violation as base and infamous. By this means the sentiments of honour may take root in their tender minds, and acquire such firmness and solidity, that they may fall little short of those principles, which are the most essential to our natures, and the most deeply radicated in our internal constitution. (T 500-1)

This early manipulation of us, plus a subsequent concern for our reputation, enables each person to "fix an inviolable law to himself, never, by any temptation, to be induc'd to violate those principles, which are essential to a man of probity and honor" (T 501). It provides a motive to perform each and every honest act, and to refrain from each and every dishonest one.

### **The Natural Ideas of Virtue Meet the Actual Workings of Moral Sentiment**

If this is the process that generates the motive characteristic of a person of probity and honor, then it is not a natural motive, in the sense of being nonmoral. It is, instead, a moral sentiment, strengthened to become a motive. Furthermore, artifice has some hand in fashioning it, although artifice can only work on naturally-arising materials (T 500). However, in spite of these facts, we continue to accept the "undoubted maxim" that there is a nonmoral motive of each type of virtuous action; hence the circularity problem. But it is a problem in our concepts, not in the world. So long as the moral sentiment approves the motive of honest action, whatever that motive is (whether moral or nonmoral), honesty is in fact a virtue. If we grant that not only nonmoral motives can win approval, but also moral motives and (at an early stage) even mere actions conforming to socially necessary practices, then the circle disappears. (Since we have not actually granted this in our ordinary moral thinking, however, common sense retains the circle.)

This analysis requires that Hume relax his claim (2) that for every virtue there is a nonmoral motive that we approve and that imparts moral merit to the actions it motivates. Or rather, on this reading it is not Hume's considered view that this claim is universal; he restricts it to the natural virtues and thinks that when it comes to the artificial virtues, we expect (2) to hold but it does not. He sees the circle about the motive of honesty as an effect of our conjoining our concept of a virtue with the psychological facts. If I am right that in his own voice he espouses only this weaker claim, this is down-played in the text. But the signs are there. Hume draws attention to what he calls "our ideas of vice and virtue" which mirror "the natural, and usual force" of our passions (T 488), or again "our common measures of duty" which follow the "common and natural course of our passions" (T 484), especially their

partiality. For example, in the absence of conventions of property we could not regard the taking of material goods for ourselves or our loved ones as immoral, because "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). So we begin by thinking of all virtue as natural virtue. After the artifices are in place, it seems, we do not update our understanding. "[T]he vulgar definition of justice" assumes there is such a thing as ownership independent of the virtue of honesty (T 526-527). And the supposition that ownership is natural leads us to a circular definition of justice or honesty. "This deceitful method of reasoning is a plain proof, that there are contain'd in the subject some obscurities and difficulties, which we are not able to surmount, and which we desire to evade by this artifice" (T 528).<sup>14</sup> When Hume comes to discuss fidelity to promises, he again expects us to think of this as a natural virtue; and that thought not only leads us to an analogous definitional circle about fidelity but to an additional problem of having to "feign" a "peculiar act of the mind" (T 516-519, 523). Fortunately the natural conception of vice and virtue—this bit of common sense proto-theory that gives rise to the circle—is not quite accurate and can be ignored in practice. Once we invent rules of property, we can in fact develop a new motive, a moral one, that is impartial and elicits our approval. This approval is sufficient to make the having of this motive a virtue, on what Hume takes to be the right conception of virtue, which differs slightly from the commonsensical conception with which we are fitted at the outset. The natural virtues have nonmoral motives which generate approval, just as we expect. The artificial virtues do not; they depend upon the sense of virtue or the sense of duty, which in them is generated in a different way. In the artificial virtues we do not need a nonmoral motive to give us a basis for approval. Socially beneficial conventions identify types of actions by their outward form and our approval is then directed toward these. If all goes well, this approval is then strengthened to become a motivating sentiment. So our approval of honest action, instead of depending upon the motive of honest action, ultimately provides it.

Thus for Hume, the honest person is someone whose approval of honesty has been both strengthened to become a motivating sentiment and directed toward each and every act required by the rules of property. Those who have such a sentiment evoke our approval of their character. The having of this motive of honest action is the virtue of honesty. Mere rule-following is not enough for this virtue; one needs morally-motivated rule-following.

One may wonder whether philosophical reflection is likely to undermine this virtue. Psychologically, Hume seems to think the distaste for theft and fraud (the sense of honor) is too thoroughly ingrained to be eroded by the knowledge that our honesty is only a contrivance to serve society, just as the

modest woman's "backwardness and dread" is too much a part of her to disappear in old age. It may seem, however, that even if the motivating feelings are permanent and intrinsically aim at the pleasures of self-approval rather than at the goal of the social good, reflection shows us that the *justification* for these feelings lies solely in the good to society, and that this good does not in fact depend upon every individual act of honesty. In the cases where no threat to society is at hand from an act of fraud, for example, while the feeling of disapproval remains, it may on reflection strike the philosopher as groundless, and so the disposition to exceptionless honesty may seem unjustified.<sup>15</sup> Whether this is a real difficulty for Hume depends on what he takes to be the basis of normativity or justification. One possibility is that he follows Hutcheson in reducing all justifying reasons to considerations that evoke approval.<sup>16</sup> On this view there is no justification of moral judgment to be found outside human sentiments—not even in the public good. Approval and disapproval *are* our justifications, our only justifications. This remains so even if the approval and disapproval of some actions are socially manufactured, originally for the purpose of serving the public good. The thought that our approval of some trait is unjustified because the trait lacks a certain connection with the good is then an incoherent one. Whether or not this is a satisfactory general theory of justification, if this is Hume's theory (which is a matter of some controversy), it leaves our approval of honest action no less justified than our approval of anything else.

Alternatively, we may adopt a less extreme reading of Hume on justification. An approved disposition and its resulting actions are justified. Our approval of them is warranted, on this view, provided the disposition has some systematic causal connection to the social good, although that connection need not be a direct or simple one. Thus, approval of benevolence is warranted by its tendency to cause pleasure directly, approval of honesty is warranted by its tendency to cause pleasure obliquely (through its role in a practice), but approval of fasting, penance, and mortification is not warranted because these produce no good at all (E 270), either individually or as needed features of any institution. If this is the Humean view of justification, there are no reasons, on reflection, to regard our disapproval of a seemingly (or really) harmless act of fraud as ungrounded; the disapproval of one dishonest act is sufficiently warranted by the oblique connection between the disposition to perform acts of this kind and social harm. Hume may be wrong, however, about whether approval of feminine chastity and modesty is similarly warranted by a suitable connection of these dispositions with the social good through the practice they make possible.<sup>17</sup>

### A Different Role for Redirected Interest?

The role of redirected greed or interest in this story, then, is largely preliminary. It enables us to create the convention of property and to keep it

going for awhile. And it gives parents and leaders one motive (among others) to magnify the moral sentiments of their charges into a distinct motive to conforming acts, which Hume sometimes calls the sentiment of honor. But redirected interest itself need not be a persisting motive of honest action and it is not that in virtue of which we approve of honest actions and so classify them as virtuous.

Some readers of Hume think he is doing something simpler and more straightforward. There is a nonmoral motive of honest action, they claim, namely, enlightened or redirected interest. It is not a natural motive in one sense, for it is somewhat artificial; but it is natural in the sense of nonmoral.<sup>18</sup> It is a nonmoral, artificial motive. What is meant may be the specific passion of greed or avidity, but enlightened or re-oriented to a new means. Or it may be general self-interest, the appetite to good and aversion to evil (pleasure and pain) as such, that is redirected.<sup>19</sup> Now, self-interest and greed are both natural rather than artificial motives, but adherence to rules of property is not their natural means of fulfillment. Without the invention of a practice of ownership, these motives would cause us to take whatever we could get. Only in the context of the artifice of property can they be directed to this different activity of conforming to the rules of property, for only in that context will such actions preserve society, which serves our interests. We then come to feel approval for this character trait of redirected interest, this special motive, since it serves to preserve society, which is so beneficial to all. Consequently, on this interpretation, redirected interest is a virtue, the virtue of honesty.<sup>20</sup>

There are two main difficulties with this interpretation.

First, it identifies the virtue of honesty with the virtue of prudence as it takes shape in a social context, a bad move for a virtue theorist and a hard one to find in Hume. Hume the virtue theorist has things to say about the natural ability or natural virtue of prudence, the calm and informed pursuit of one's long-term interest (T 610), but he shows no signs of identifying honesty with prudence or with prudence in a certain context. If conformity to the rules of property in a social life serves my interest, then my prudence will move me to conform, just as it moves me to follow hygienic practices if I live in close proximity to other people. But the person who is thus prudent under social conditions does not fit the picture Hume draws of the "man of probity and honour." Hume is careful to distinguish honesty from benevolence, pointing out that if all we had was benevolence, "a man wou'd not be oblig'd to leave others in the possession of more than he is oblig'd [by benevolence] to give them" (T 482). It seems that had he realized it was necessary, Hume would have distinguished honesty from prudence as well. Hume would not think it psychologically realistic to say that ordinary honest acts really are motivated by the desire to preserve society for my own good. If the public good is too remote to motivate loan repayment (T 481), surely the preservation of society is as well. And there is no textual evidence that Hume thinks our approval of

the virtue of honesty or justice is aroused by the motivating sentiment of interest. Furthermore, that would be an implausible claim to make; we do not judge a person honest because of her lively and realistic sense of self-interest, and a reasonable virtue theorist is quite unlikely to claim that we do.

Secondly, as Hume himself notes both in the *Treatise* and in the second *Enquiry*, individual honest actions do not always serve our interests. They do not even always help to preserve society. In the *Treatise* Hume mentions returning a fortune to a seditious bigot (T 497), an honest action that might well *reduce* social stability. In the *Enquiry* he introduces the sensible knave, who realizes that he stands to profit from dishonest actions that happen not to harm the social fabric, since not all violations of the rules of property or contract do, in fact, threaten to bring society down. If redirected self-interest is still self-interest (or redirected greed is still greed), and it moves us to conform to the rules of property in order to preserve society, then it seems that it will fail us in those cases where we realize that such conformity does not in fact help to preserve society (the seditious bigot), or where we see that violation would not in the least endanger society (the secret loan in the *Treatise* and the sensible knave). Both general self-interest and the specific passion of greed are goal-directed motives, and they are motives founded on pleasure and pain (T II, *passim.*, esp. 438-439). These work as follows in Hume's psychology: one has the expectation of pain or pleasure from a certain object, which triggers desire or aversion for that object (or some related motive); in the presence of beliefs about cause and effect, one consequently comes to desire or be averse to the object's causes. When we are inclined to act because we believe that a certain object will yield pleasure or let us avoid pain, once we see that this causal belief is false, "our passions yield to our reason without any opposition" (T 416). That is, we will not be moved by interest to conform to the rules of property any time we see that conformity is not needed to preserve society (and is personally costly) or does not in any way help to preserve it. Thus, redirected interest does not yield the kind of reliable conformity to the rules of property that we would expect of an honest person.

This has led some interpreters to attribute to Hume a "noble lie" or "error theory" of honesty. This has two main versions. On one, redirected interest is indeed the nonmoral motive of honest action, and we simply don't know that our requisite causal belief is sometimes false. We believe that every act in conformity to the rules of ownership contributes to the preservation of society and so is beneficial to the agent. Thus redirected interest is an example of a passion founded on a false judgment (of the sort Hume discusses in general at T 416), but a salutary false judgment that is perpetuated by parents and politicians in the form of a noble lie.<sup>21</sup>

On the other version, we do not find within ourselves any nonmoral motive to honest action, either because we see all the exceptions and

loopholes so that redirected interest does not reliably motivate honest actions in us, or because redirected interest is not a motive we approve. But we approve of people who are disposed always to follow the rules of property, since such people are so socially beneficial, and we suppose that such people actually are motivated by some nonmoral motive to behave this way, even though we ourselves realize that we are not. We thus imagine a nonexistent or (in fact) ineffectual nonmoral motive to be an obligatory motive, one we hate ourselves for lacking. And in so hating ourselves, we come to have a motive of *duty* to follow the rules of property on all occasions, either in the hopes of acquiring the (in fact unavailable) motive, or in the hopes of concealing from ourselves our lack of it (T 479).<sup>22</sup> The error pointed out in this type of error theory is our belief that there is a nonmoral motive of honest action that we ought to have. Because this is an error, we are also in error to believe claim (1), that honesty is a virtue. So on this interpretation, Hume does not think honesty is really a virtue at all, although he does not draw attention to his skeptical conclusion.

An intermediate position says that in the *Treatise* Hume himself is taken in by the "noble lie" that compliance always preserves society and so in every case serves our (redirected) interest; *he* actually does not notice that at times it does not. But in the second *Enquiry* he realizes, with the introduction of the sensible knave, that compliance is not invariably necessary to preserve society, and so that redirected interest is not a reliable motive of compliance. Thus Hume sees in the end that there is no reliable nonmoral motive; and hence all Hume can give us is the error theory that we falsely believe in a nonexistent nonmoral motive.<sup>23</sup>

These interpretations have some central points in common. They take (2), the "undoubted maxim" requiring a nonmoral motive of every virtuous type of action, quite literally, as Hume's considered view, a claim I reject in my interpretation. The simple redirected-interest theories do not take literally Hume's claim (3), that there is no nonmoral motive for honesty; they think he means there is no non-artificial nonmoral motive of honesty, but there is a nonmoral motive—an artificial one. The noble lie and error theories grant (3) but deny that it is known to ordinary moral consciousness. Consequently, they treat (1), that honesty is a virtue, as something common sense believes but Hume himself is committed to rejecting. And they all interpret the formation of the convention and the motivation of compliance as a process with a single stage, rather than the two stages that I identified (one at which redirected interest suffices, and a later stage at which it does not and a new motive comes into being). Thus, since redirected interest surely is the operative motive when the rules of property are first in place, these interpreters find in redirected interest the only possible virtue-imparting motive of honest action. (If it proves inadequate, there is no other motive to fall back upon.) But the result is that they attribute to Hume an account of the virtue of honesty

that is implausible, both psychologically and from the point of view of virtue ethics, and, in some versions, an account that fails in its own terms. These interpretations also overlook an important bit of text: Hume's first response to the sensible knave. The knave suggests that "he conducts himself with the most wisdom, who observes the general rule [that honesty is the best policy], and takes advantage of all the exceptions." Hume first says:

...if a man think that this reasoning much requires an answer, it would be a little difficult to find any which will to him appear satisfactory and convincing. If his heart rebel not against such pernicious maxims, if he feel no reluctance to the thoughts of villainy or baseness, he has indeed lost a considerable motive to virtue.... But in all ingenuous natures, the antipathy to treachery and roguery is too strong to be counterbalanced by any views of profit or pecuniary advantage. (E 283)<sup>24</sup>

Here Hume appeals to the moral motive, the deeply-ingrained "antipathy to treachery and roguery," for which he apparently sees no adequate substitute.

On my reading, redirected interest plays a smaller role than in the above interpretations. Redirected interest is the motive that gets the convention started and preserves and stabilizes it in a small subsistence-level community. But it is not the motive that makes honesty a virtue. The motive that makes honesty a virtue is a moral motive, approval of conforming acts and disapproval of violations, which has been strengthened and reinforced by habituation so as to become a motivating sentiment. Since it is not a form of greed or self-interest (or concern for others, for that matter), it can offer motivational resistance in the face of the temptation to violate the rules for one's own profit or even for society's good. The motive will not collapse in those cases where we realize that redirected interest is not served by compliance. The person who complies with the rules even in the face of this realization is the truly meritorious person, the person with the virtue of honesty. This rings true to the virtue of honesty as we find it.

## NOTES

I am grateful for comments and criticisms from John Perry, Debra Satz, Don Garrett, Vere Chappell, from students in my seminars on Hume's moral and political philosophy at Stanford University, from audiences at the Pacific Division of the APA, the Stanford Humanities Center, and the philosophy departments at the University of Washington and Occidental College. This work was supported in part by a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend and by the Stanford Humanities Center.

1 Page references in parentheses within the text are abbreviated as follows:

'T' followed by page number: David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978). 'E' followed by page number: 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). All italics in original.

2 This wording is from T 483 of the (first) Selby-Bigge edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888, reprinted 1975), *not* the second, Nidditch edition. Nidditch interpolates the word 'naturally': "...we have naturally no real or universal motive for observing the laws of equity..." following revisions made in Hume's hand on the printed first edition of the *Treatise*. I am grateful to V. C. Chappell for drawing this difference to my attention.

3 A comparable claim occurs in Hume's essay "Of the Original Contract": "The second kind of moral duties [which includes those of honesty] are such as are not supported by any original instinct of nature, but are performed entirely from a sense of obligation" (David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* [Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987], 480).

4 David Gauthier, "Artificial Virtues and the Sensible Knave," *Hume Studies* 18.2 (1992): 401-427, is helpful on the meanings of 'natural'.

5 The love of mankind as such fails to motivate under any circumstances, since there is no such sentiment (T 481).

6 This idea is further suggested at T 528: "This deceitful method of reasoning is a plain proof, that there are contain'd in the subject some obscurities and difficulties, which we are not able to surmount, and which we desire to evade by this artifice."

Hume uses the word 'artifice' and its cognates in various ways in the *Treatise*. Sometimes it has no connotations of disguise or misrepresentation (e.g., T 70). But in places it indicates something counterfeit or unreal, a connotation the term already could have in Hume's day, according to *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. 'artifice,' 'artificial'. Thus, he uses 'artifice' for our misrepresentations of our own characters to ourselves and others (T 219), and for what mathematicians and philosophers do when they misrepresent their absurd ideas as rational ones that are purely intellectual and very obscure (T 72). Interestingly, in T I iv 6 he uses 'artifice' to indicate a device we employ to preserve the pretense or illusion that one of our concepts is instantiated when it does not and cannot fit reality (we apply the concept of one and the same object over time—the same ship—when what is really present is a series of related objects, T 257). This use seems to be what he intends in his discussion of the artificiality of material honesty. Our artifice preserves for us the illusion that our ordinary concept of a virtue is instantiated where it is not and cannot be.

7 For the different view that Hume introduces artifice to remove the circle, see Jonathan Harrison, *Hume's Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 8; J. L. Mackie, *Hume's Moral Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 79-80; and Francis Snare, *Morals, Motivation and Convention*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), chap. 7. Harrison and Mackie think Hume does eliminate the circle; Snare thinks he confuses two distinct

circles and has the materials to eliminate one but not the other, which is in fact intractable. Terence Penelhum does not address the issue of the circle directly, but thinks Hume's account of the origins of honesty in the convention of ownership eliminates the puzzle of how we can regard honesty as a virtue even though we lack natural inclinations to such actions in his *Hume* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 154-5.

8 What Hume means by obligation is much discussed. It includes, at least, motivation, but presumably obligation is motivation or potential motivation with some special status. In this passage Hume distinguishes natural from moral obligation and calls the moral obligation "the sentiment of right and wrong."

9 This explains why Hume in places seems to think that conformity to the rules of property in a cooperative community can be genuinely disadvantageous to the individual at times, and even to the community (T 481, 482, 497), and in other places seems to think that conformity only seems disadvantageous because the person loses sight of the long-term advantages (T 497-498, 499, 535). Hume is not very concerned about whether the individual is right to think so, since on his view people sometimes will think so, rightly or not, and his focus is on the motivational consequences of their thinking so.

10 In this I agree with Mackie that Hume countenances approval of mere rule-following action. But Mackie thinks the story can stop here. "For single acts of justice taken on their own," he says, "there is often no intelligible motive; they can be understood only as parts of a general scheme." However, since according to Hume's moral psychology there must be some passion prompting actions that accord with that general scheme, Mackie adds that "...the artifice consists in the cultivation of a sentiment in favour of every act that honesty requires, including those that are not beneficial" to anyone (*Hume's Moral Theory*, 81). What this sentiment might be, and how it can be specified noncircularly, is not explained. We also need to know how an enduring character trait is to be engineered, since honesty must turn out to be a virtue.

11 Here is a bit more of the context of this quotation:

Upon the whole, then, we are to consider this distinction betwixt justice and injustice, as having two different foundations, viz. that of *self-interest*,...and that of *morality*....'Tis the voluntary convention and artifice of men, which makes the first interest take place; and therefore those laws of justice are so far to be consider'd as *artificial*. After that interest is once establish'd and acknowledg'd, the sense of morality in the observance of these rules follows *naturally*, and of itself; tho' 'tis certain, that it is also augmented by a new *artifice*, and that the public instructions of politicians, and the private education of parents, contribute to the giving us a sense of honour and duty in the strict regulation of our actions with regard to the properties of others. (T 533-534)

Thus a *second* artifice is employed to give us a motive to adhere strictly to the

rules of property.

12 Nidditch provides a manuscript amendment just before the artifice of parents and politicians is discussed at T 499 which suggests one reason why the new artifice is needed:

Thus *Self-interest* is the original motive to the Establishment of justice: but a *Sympathy with public Interest* is the Source of the *moral* Approbation, which attends that Virtue. This latter Principle of Sympathy is too weak to controul our Passions; but has sufficient Force to influence our Taste, and give us the Sentiments of Approbation or Blame. (T 670)

13 At the start of T III ii 12, Hume says that he introduces the topic of feminine chastity and modesty in order to further explain and defend one aspect of his system of the artificial virtues as a whole, "the universal approbation or blame, which follows their observance or transgression, and which some may not think sufficiently explain'd from the general interests of society" (T 570).

14 This passage may identify a circle distinct from the one Hume introduces at T 483, but there is an interpretation on which he is talking about the same or nearly the same circle. The "vulgar definition of justice [is]...*a constant and perpetual will of giving every one his due.*" (T 526). We must read "a constant and perpetual will of giving every one his due" as the motivational disposition that is definitive of the virtue of honesty. The circle referred to at T 528 is then this: the character trait of honesty is a motivational disposition to give to everyone his property, and property is (defined as) what someone who is honest is motivated to give to everyone. From this it follows that the motive of honest action is the motive to give to everyone what the motive of honest action moves an agent to give to everyone. This becomes the motivational circle of T 483 if we substitute "do" for "give to everyone": the motive of honest action is the motive to do what the motive of honest action moves an agent to do.

15 An objection of this type is made by Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, v. 15 (1994, given 1992), 75, in her discussion of the knavish lawyer.

16 "When we ask the reason of an action, we sometimes mean, 'What truth shows a quality in the action, exciting the agent to do it?'...Sometimes for a reason of actions we show the truth expressing a quality, engaging our approbation.... The former sort of reasons we will call exciting, and the latter justifying. Now we shall find that...the justifying [reasons] presuppose a moral sense" (Francis Hutcheson, *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, edited by Bernard Peach [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971], 121).

17 The less extreme interpretation of Hume's view of justification, unlike the Hutchesonian interpretation, permits empirical investigation to show that both the modest woman's sexual reticence and people's approval of it are unjustified. Whether these dispositions actually are necessary for the persistence of the institution of parental marriage and father-support of children, whether this institution really is indispensable for successful child-rearing, and whether the various features of feminine modesty that Hume enumerates really serve the social good in any way or are instead,

perhaps, mere instruments of harmful male power, are empirical questions open to answers different from Hume's but consistent with his underlying theory. Hume is, of course, right that children must be provided for, but he may be wrong about how this can be done effectively. He is surely wrong to think that in the context of marriage and father-support of known children, a loose standard of chastity for men poses no significant threat to the well-being of children. If marriage is to be the artifice with which to solve the child-rearing problem inherent in the human condition, Hume might more consistently argue for chastity and modesty of both sexes. Other arrangements besides parental marriage and father-support are also possible and might work well, for example (to stick to belief-driven affectionate instincts), care of children by the mother and maternal grandmother. Then again, technological alternatives such as contraception and paternity testing might enlist fathers' support yet obviate the need for anyone's chastity or modesty. It remains to be investigated what psychological dispositions would be needed successfully to implement different arrangements.

18 Again, recall the three distinctions: natural vs. artificial, natural (that is, nonmoral) vs. moral, and natural vs. civil. (The third does not concern us here.)

19 Annette Baier is right that it is not self-interest in general that threatens the destruction of society, but rather "avidity" or "the interested affection"—that is, material greed specifically. However, self-interest in general could well motivate compliance with the society-preserving rules of property, since the preservation of society not only gratifies people's greed but also fulfills desires and needs for security, mutual assistance, and companionship. (*A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise*, [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991], 220-221.)

20 Interpretations along these lines were proposed by Geoffrey Sayre-McCord in his comments on my "Why Are Some Virtues Artificial?", an address to the Hume Society in Chicago, April 1993, and by Don Garrett, in personal communication. David Gauthier, "Artificial Virtues and the Sensible Knave," attributes it to the Hume of the *Treatise*; I discuss his more complex interpretation below.

21 Marcia Baron, "Hume's Noble Lie: An Account of His Artificial Virtues," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 12 (1982).

22 The view of Knud Haakonssen in *The Science of a Legislator: The Natural Jurisprudence of David Hume and Adam Smith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), chap. 2 (esp. Part 8), is that interest is not a morally approved motive, and so we imagine another motive, the willing of an obligation, which we hate ourselves for lacking. David Gauthier, in "Artificial Virtues and the Sensible Knave," proposes that "the initial self-interested motive fails to survive critical reflection" but our approval of conformity to the rules of property persists, so we then imagine another nonmoral motive, the willing of an obligation. Both writers apply this analysis to the virtue of fidelity to promises as well as honesty. The idea that we "feign" a special motive, the willing of an obligation, comes from Hume's discussion of promising in T III ii 5.

23 This is the interpretation of Gauthier, "Artificial Virtues and the Sensible Knave." Gauthier points out that this leaves Hume with a defective view. Once we realize that redirected interest cannot move informed people to strict, constant compliance, we will cease to approve of redirected interest. But there is no other nonmoral motive of reliable compliance of which we can approve instead. Since, according to (2), there must be a nonmoral motive first if moral approval is to take hold, we will not be able to approve, and so we will be left without any moral motive for compliance either.

Here I note two points of departure from this article besides the ones in the text. First, Gauthier's claim that Hume, that crafty student of Hobbes, did not see that honest action sometimes is not in our (even redirected) interest until he came to write the second *Enquiry* is rather surprising, especially given Hume's examples of this in the *Treatise*. (The *Treatise* contains passages strongly suggesting that he saw it and others strongly suggesting that he did not.) Second, Gauthier thinks that on Hume's account we cannot approve of the motive of honesty in the end, whatever that motive may be, because honest actions, while they benefit others, harm oneself. But this misunderstands the way moral approval works in Hume. Hume can certainly account for our approval of things that are a net loss to ourselves. In occupying the common point of view we take account of the responses of all persons affected by the trait and so come to approve of what generates more pleasure than pain on the whole. In the case of honesty, in coming to feel moral approval or disapproval we imaginatively take the viewpoint of the whole of society. The impact of the trait on ourselves is encompassed in that already. So we will approve, even though we may not be moved, since mere approval is often less motivating than interest.

Stephen Darwall, in *The British Moralists and the Internal 'Ought': 1640-1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 309-11, likewise reads the *Treatise* as claiming that compliance with the rules of property is in fact in the (long-term) interest of every agent on every occasion, although this may not always be clear to her, and lesser short-term gains may also tempt her to violate; while in the second *Enquiry* and the essay "The Origin of Government" Hume recognizes the possibility that on occasion compliance actually is contrary to the agent's over-all interest. For Darwall, however, Hume's ultimate position is not an error theory; rather, the motivating disposition which constitutes the virtue of honesty is the acceptance of the rules of property as authoritative in guiding one's actions, a "disposition to engage in a form of practical reasoning substantially different from any countenanced by [Hume's] official theory of the will" (317). Thus, Hume is committed to the existence of a motivating disposition, rule-acceptance, in spite of himself. Apart from anything Hume says, it is probably true that the honest person engages in a form of practical reasoning and motivation which is not goal-directed in the way in which Hume thinks all motivation is. But since there is no room for such a phenomenon in Hume's theory, I read him, not as contradicting his hedonism and general theory of the will and motivating passions (which my account preserves), but instead as waiving a less fundamental requirement of his science of human nature, his requirement of a nonmoral motive as the sole primary ground of approval.

24 Of course, Hume goes on to describe other unattractive features of the life of a sensible knave.