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CASS WELLER

It is not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger. It is not contrary to reason for me to choose my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an Indian, or person wholly unknown to me. It is as little contrary to reason to prefer even my own acknowledged lesser good to my greater, and have a more ardent affection for the former than the latter. (T 2.3.3.6; SBN 416)¹

Everyone is familiar with the cases Hume parades in this passage when he dramatically displays just how far one's preferences and other passions can go without being contrary to reason. His general point is tediously clear. Whatever failing there is in one who prefers the destruction of the world to the scratching of his finger or chooses his total ruin to prevent the least uneasiness of a person wholly unknown to him, it is not a failing of reason, unless this preference and choice involve false suppositions of fact, existence, or mathematics. But they do not according to Hume. So they are not contrary to reason.

At the same time, anyone who is given to worrying and fretting over the text will be initially somewhat at a loss to explain in any further detail the nature of the phenomena Hume flaunts as not flouting reason and how they relate to one another. For example, is the notion of preference at work that of a settled judgment of value or that of a blind impulse to be understood only in terms of strength of desire? Is the character Hume inhabits in the first person one who simply finds himself with a blind urge to keep his finger scratch-free or one who

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has a settled policy of keeping his finger scratch-free viewed as more valuable than anything else. Is preferring my lesser good to my acknowledged greater good the practical counterpart of self-consciously believing that *p* and not *p*? Or is it, rather, a common form of weakness? And if so, how is it related to the two previous cases?

Although most discussions of Hume's views on practical reason refer to this passage, I know of no extended discussion of the three notorious cases.² This is no doubt due in part to the fact that the details do not really matter for understanding the main point. A mental state not involving a false belief of experience or *a priori* reason cannot be contrary to reason.³ Nevertheless, I think it is a good idea to try and figure out just what Hume is saying and that by digging right here we may hope to uncover important aspects of Hume's theory of evaluation, motive, and reason. The task is to get a more detailed view of Hume's own theoretical understanding of the preferences and choices he exhibits as not contrary to reason, in particular whether a preference is an evaluative attitude, and how it may conflict with an acknowledged interest. To this end we will have to go beyond what is adequate for a reader's understanding of the preferences in their narrow rhetorical context. Hume himself invites the reader, inadvertently or not, to look for the wider Humean explanation of preferring one's acknowledged lesser good to the greater by deploying the analogy of a one pound weight's raising a hundred through the advantage of its situation. This idea connects with other passages in the *Treatise*, as we shall see, in particular with Hume's discussion of the preference for the contiguous over the remote at T 3.2.7 (SBN 534–9). With a clearer view of Hume's understanding of the preferences we will be in a better position to ask about the sort of criticism persons with such preferences are subject to. And, to tip my hand, we will see that Hume's moral psychology reflects, to a certain extent, Butler's three-tiered structure of conscience, self-love and particular passions.⁴ Finally, perhaps more significantly, we might see that, despite Hume's denial that truth-seeking reason is practical, he does make room for something that plays the role of practical reason.⁵ Indeed, I believe a case can be made that he is attempting to reconceive reason in the practical sphere by identifying it with authoritative calm passions.⁶ More important than the use of the word "reason," however, is the claim that certain passions have authority and normative force so that acting contrary to them is acting as one ought not.

In section I, I consider several readings of preferring destruction to a scratch and choosing one's total ruin over the slight discomfort of strangers. In section II, I defend a reading of preferring one's own acknowledged lesser good by appealing to T 3.2.7 (SBN 534–9) where Hume discusses the preference for the contiguous to the remote. In section III, I show how preferring one's acknowledged lesser good is subject to criticism in a sense that renders the preference contrary to reason.

In section IV, I finally return to the first two cases and show how they too involve passions contrary to reason in a sense to be articulated.

In the course of my argument I assume that passions are not merely conative vectors triggered by factual beliefs about pleasure. Indeed, I speak of some Humean passions as both motivating and evaluative. For example, I claim that the calm passion by which “men often counter-act a violent passion in prosecution of their interests and designs” (T 2.3.3.10; SBN 418) is a motivating attitude of approval toward an action and is expressible in the form of the judgment, “Doing x is, on the whole, better for me than doing y.” If in so speaking I seem to be knocking at closed doors, I beg the reader’s patience.⁷

I. Two Families of Readings

Let us then return to the notorious sentences.

It is not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger. It is not contrary to reason for me to choose my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an Indian, or person wholly unknown to me. It is as little contrary to reason to prefer even my own acknowledged lesser good to my greater, and have a more ardent affection for the former than the latter. (T 2.3.3.6; SBN 416)

It is apparent that in deciding what to make of the notorious cases much depends on what Hume means by “choose” and “prefer” in these passages. The issue is whether these terms refer to higher level evaluative attitudes constituting the agent’s conception of her overall good, at one extreme, or merely to the relative strength of non-evaluative desires, at the other extreme.

On one, perhaps less familiar, reading, invited by the content and cadence of Hume’s rhetoric as well as the implications of the ordinary use of “prefer” and “choose,” the cases are presented in order of ascending apparent absurdity: (1) maintaining as a matter of principle the scratchlessness of one’s finger at the expense of the existence of everything; (2) concern, to the point of self-sacrifice, that someone identified only as wholly unknown and remote suffer not the slightest discomfort; and (3) finally, most absurdly, self-consciously being motivated to pursue as better what one acknowledges as worse. On a slight variant of this reading one might suppose that with the first two cases Hume is canvassing the extremes of selfishness and selflessness, someone who cares so little for others that he would rather all humanity, himself excepted, perish if the cost of saving it is a trivial inconvenience to himself, and someone who cares so much for others and so little for himself that he would sacrifice everything including his life to provide a trivial good to anyone anywhere without regard to merit or need.⁸ The third case

would then in a sense combine the first two by incorporating the opposition of regard only for others and regard only for oneself into a single absurd case of a self so divided against itself as to be motivated to pursue as better what it acknowledges on the same scale of value as worse.⁹ Let us call this family of readings, A.

A second group of readings is perhaps more familiar because of the presumption that passions are for Hume more or less blind impulses and anything but considered judgments of value. Let us approach this second group by considering such a reading of the third case, namely, that preferring an acknowledged lesser good is presented as some recognizable form of weakness.¹⁰ Someone, while acknowledging that smoking is not as good as being healthy and being thereby moved to refrain from smoking, nevertheless has a desire to smoke that is stronger than the motive to refrain. Such a reading seems to be supported by the subsequent remarks about the mechanics of desire, as well as the mention of strength of mind a few pages later at T 2.3.3.10 (SBN 418). Let us call this family of readings B.

My aim is to defend, in due course, a mixed reading that combines A readings of the first two cases and a B reading of the third case. It would be a good idea, however, before going any further to acknowledge explicitly what I take to be minimal interpretative constraints and thereby expose the tension among them.

- (i) Other things being equal, the more shocking a preference or choice a case presents, the better the reading of a case. (Shock)
- (ii) Preferring one's own acknowledged lesser good to one's greater is to be read as contrasting somehow with the first two cases. (Difference)
- (iii) The claim that preferring one's own acknowledged lesser good to one's greater is not contrary to reason is to be read as more shocking than the two that precede it. (Vertical Shock)
- (iv) The senses of "prefer" in the first and third should be as uniform as possible. (Uniformity)
- (v) The fact that Hume finds nothing extraordinary in the preference for one's own acknowledged lesser good and invokes an ordinary mechanical analogy to explain it dictates that the preference is to be read as a fairly common psychological phenomenon. (Ordinariness)

Let us begin to develop the A readings by considering the first case, preferring the destruction of the world to getting a scratch on one's finger. If this preference were a higher level evaluative attitude in accordance with the literal minded version of the A reading it would likely be one of those passions that has become a settled principle of action,¹¹ perhaps even as comprehensive as an all things considered view of one's interest or good. Such a principle would likely have developed from an initial "irrational" fear of getting a scratch on one's finger. As a fixed policy, however, one now avoids at all cost doing anything in which there is a prospect of getting a scratched finger. If such a policy does not wholly constitute the agent's

acknowledged greatest good it would at least figure as a dominant consideration in his or her scheme of values. Thus when placed in circumstances in which the only prospect of the agent's keeping her finger scratch-free is to destroy the world, that's what she opts for, unless owing to weakness she is defeated by a gust of contrary passion. On the less determinate variant reading, the agent simply cultivates an exquisite selfishness. In acting on her general appetite for the good she takes no interest in the good or interests of others to the point of not lifting a finger, when that would suffice, to save an entire population or someone well known to her, a friend or a relative. In either case it is obvious that the agent need not be motivationally conflicted at all when acting on this preference. Her conception of her well-being, her acknowledged greater good, is dominated by the goal of keeping her finger scratch-free or her pleasures uninterrupted by the needs of others. Such an agent evinces contempt more than pity. In deference to Butler's idea of the cool principle of self-love¹² let us call these A readings of preferring the destruction of the world and choosing one's total ruin *the cool preference readings*.¹³ The cool preference readings, on their face, seem to have this advantage over the rival B readings. They make the preferences more shocking as examples of passions not contrary to reason. The reason is that from a rhetorical standpoint, exhibiting, as not contrary to reason, an obviously demented conception of one's own good or at least a repugnantly self-regarding one is initially more provocative than mention of an alien desire one would gladly be rid of.

On the B alternatives to the cool preference readings the preference or choice is a momentary gust of passion or a standing low level desire that on occasion simply erupts, consistent with some form of weakness.¹⁴ We may distinguish two forms of weakness. The first is the phenomenon of having a blind impulse or non-evaluative desire¹⁵ to do what one sees as running counter to one's interests and being bested by that desire, which, though non-evaluative, is motivationally stronger. This is commonly called weakness of will or *akrasia*. I will call it simple weakness of will.¹⁶ In the second form, the defeating desire is minimally evaluative but not comparative. One's wanting to eat the peach is informed by some *prima facie* positive evaluation, however primitive. As in simple weakness of will the apparently comparative character of the preference is reflected in its being motivationally stronger than what it defeats. What the two forms of weakness have in common is a lower level motivating passion not tied to the comparative judgment of value or interested motive defeated by the preference.¹⁷ Accordingly, preferring the destruction of the world to getting a scratch, would, on this reading, be a lower level motivating passion of either form and not an interested desire aimed at the agent's overall good on her conception of it. The apparently comparative character of this preference would lie solely in its greater motivational force. Let us then distinguish within the family of B readings, B.1, preference as a non-evaluative blind impulse, and B.2, preference as a minimally evaluative desire.

II. Reasons against B Readings of Preferring World-Destruction and Choosing Ruin

I now turn to consider the shortcomings of the B reading of the first two cases.¹⁸ Although the presumption of ordinary usage¹⁹ gives a slight edge to construing preference and choice more in the direction of thinking-better than in the direction of simply wanting-more, I do not put too much weight on that.²⁰ Instead, my argument depends on the premise, to be defended, that on the B reading the obvious examples of preferring destruction to a scratch will typically involve desires, standing or occurrent, that conflict with the agent's implied higher level attitudes informed by normal human values such as self-preservation and limited generosity. In that case the phenomenon in question would be some form of weakness akin to a B reading of the third case, preferring one's acknowledged lesser good to a greater. But now, assuming, as most do, a B reading of the third case, we run afoul of several interpretative constraints. For, if preferring one's own acknowledged lesser good is some form of weakness and the first two cases are merely instances of it, the requirements of Difference and Vertical Shock would be violated.²¹

I now proceed to defend the premise that, on the B reading, preferring destruction to a scratch involves desires that come into conflict with an agent's higher level evaluative attitudes. Suppose, then, in accordance with the B reading, that preferring the annihilation of everything to getting a scratch is a matter of wanting to avoid getting a scratch and that it does not involve thinking scratchlessness more valuable than anything else or even good at all. The fact that Hume speaks of preferring destruction to a scratch indicates a point where the agent will, with eyes open, have to destroy the world to avoid a scratch. But we are to suppose that preserving the world is not seen as valuable in a way that would give rise to a conflict between a desire to preserve the world and the desire to destroy it to avoid a scratch. Such a person would have to have no acknowledged interests. For any such interest would either conflict with the desire to destroy the world to avoid a scratch or, contrary to hypothesis, be an acknowledged interest in scratchlessness rather than a simple desire to avoid the pain of a scratch. So the question is whether Hume, speaking in the first person, countenances the possibility of a person having no acknowledged interests. I take this to be a question of whether for Hume self-conscious human agency includes the principle of self-love or self-interest. I take the answer to this question to be "yes."²² And thus, if preferring destruction to a scratch is simply a propensity to go for finger-protection rather than world-preservation it will be a case of weakness in which the propensity to go for finger-protection is motivationally stronger than a motive that is or would be generated by an acknowledged interest.

Thus, natural examples of the preference on B readings would run as follows. Someone recoils in fear at the prospect of getting a scratch on her finger and, to

her horror, cannot face grasping a jagged lever to open a door to safety. Contrary to her acknowledged interest she is more inclined to destruction than to getting a scratch on the finger. Another agent often refuses life saving aid to others at minimal cost to herself while denying that the interests of others count for nothing and is deeply ashamed of this trait. Contrary to what she knows is right she is more strongly inclined toward their destruction than to her least inconvenience. Given, then, that cases of preference so minimally construed are most naturally illustrated as conflicting with the agent's higher level evaluative attitudes, the preference turns out to be an instance of the third case, assumed to be weakness, stated in full generality, in violation of Difference and Vertical shock.

Let me reinforce the point about Difference on behalf of the A, or cool preference, reading of the first two cases. Notice that the claim that it is as little contrary to reason to prefer even one's acknowledged lesser good to one's greater implies a contrast with the earlier cases. On its face the contrast is between preferring an acknowledged lesser good and preferring an acknowledged greater good. Hume is trying to shock the reader with passions that are not contrary to reason. On the A reading of the first case the paraphrase would run:

It is one thing, although not contrary to reason, however otherwise absurd, to prefer as my greater good keeping my finger scratch-free to preventing the destruction of the world. However, it is as little contrary to reason to prefer even my own acknowledged lesser good to my greater.

Compare this to the paraphrase on the B reading”

It is one thing, although not contrary to reason, however otherwise absurd, to be so strongly moved by a blind impulse to keep my finger free of scratches that it prevents me from preventing the destruction of the world including me and my finger. However, it is as little contrary to reason to prefer even my own acknowledged lesser good to my greater.

The contrast seems to be lost because by making this observation in the first person the speaker appears to be implicitly acknowledging a scratch-free finger as a lesser good.

Similar considerations apply to the second case of choosing ruin to benefit strangers. To date then, I am persuaded that the evidence favors the A, or cool preference, readings of the first two cases. Accordingly, in the context of the first two cases preferring x to y and choosing to forgo y for the sake of x would be passions with a conative and evaluative character, where the latter is expressible as the comparative judgment that x is better than y . As we proceed I will try to make more plausible the claim that Hume countenances such a construal of preference

where the preference arises through deliberation²³ and more generally that Hume allows for desires that are irreducibly evaluative.²⁴

III. A Defense of the B.2 Reading of Preferring One's Acknowledged Lesser Good

Let us turn to the third case which Hume introduces as going beyond the first two:

'Tis as little contrary to reason to prefer even my own acknowledg'd lesser good to my greater and have a more ardent affection for the former than the latter.

I have been provisionally assuming a B reading of the third case and will now provide an explicit defense of a B.2 reading. If, however, this third case is in fact some form of weakness stated in full generality, it is not obvious that it meets the A reading of the first two in shock value, let alone, that it goes beyond them. Even if weakness covers cases where an agent is defeated by a shocking desire, to adopt the object of such a desire as one's considered good would seem more shocking.²⁵ Moreover, we are still constrained by the requirement that the senses of "prefer" be as uniform as possible. And thus our endorsement of the A, or cool preference, reading of the first two cases all but rules out reading the preference for one's acknowledged lesser good as a blind non-evaluative impulse, B.1.²⁶

What alternatives are there to (1) the simple weakness of will reading of preferring one's own acknowledged lesser good, B.1? Here are two I have already mentioned: (2) the second form of weakness in the B family, namely, non-comparatively desiring as good that which one recognizes as detrimental to one's interest and desiring it more than one desires to do what is dictated by one's conception of one's interest, B.2, and (3) the A reading, explicitly and self-consciously, though incoherently, ardently preferring as better what one concurrently acknowledges to be worse.²⁷

To decide among the three candidates let us begin by considering the explanation Hume offers for the phenomenon, which on its face favors the B readings, (1) and (2) above, to the exclusion of (3), the A reading.

A trivial good may, from certain circumstances, produce a desire superior to what arises from the greatest and most valuable enjoyment; nor is there any thing more extraordinary in this, than in mechanics to see one pound weight raise up a hundred by the advantage of its situation. (T 2.3.3.6; SBN 416)

The very fact that Hume offers an explanation for the phenomenon shows that he thinks it actually occurs or at least could occur. (This is the rationale for the requirement of Ordinariness.) But if the phenomenon in question implied self-consciously simultaneously preferring x to y and y to x , one would not blithely assume it to be possible, even if not contrary to reason because not founded on a false belief. It would be the practical counterpart of self-consciously accepting a proposition of the form “ p and not p .” And thus, in accordance with interpretative constraint (v), the ordinariness implied by Hume’s explanation of the phenomena is a decisive strike against this interpretation, however otherwise attractive for showing Hume at his most radical in accordance with constraints (i)–(iii).

As for the remaining alternatives, one might naturally suppose that talk of superior desires and the analogy of a one-pound weight raising up a hundred-pound weight, both in its mechanical character in general and its reference to causing bodies to move in particular, implies that Hume is concerned with greater motivating force and not evaluation. In that case one would read the preference as simple weakness of will, although, as we have seen, such a reading runs up against the uniformity constraint. That leaves the other form of weakness as the compromise. Moreover, if the goodness of the trivial good figures in the content of the superior desire for it, then the compromise candidate is all the more promising. To decide the issue more conclusively let us beat about the not so neighboring fields where Hume also discusses preferences that arise, by advantage of the situation, in contradiction to our acknowledged interests.²⁸

In his discussion of the origin of government Hume begins with this question:

Since, therefore, men are so sincerely attached to their interest, and their interest is so much concerned in the observance of justice, and this interest is so certain and avowed, it may be asked, how any disorder can ever arise in society, and what principle there is in human nature so *powerful* as to overcome so strong a passion, or so *violent* as to obscure so clear a knowledge? (T 3.2.7.1; SBN 534)

Although Hume’s question is about justice and the origin of government there is a more general question he is raising. He is looking for the “the reason why men so often act in contradiction to their known interest; and in particular why they prefer any trivial advantage, that is present, to the maintenance of order in society, which so much depends on the observance of justice” (T 3.2.7.3; SBN 535). How is a standing avowal of interest with its attendant motivation subject to defeat? What in human nature is able to detract from each component, to diminish the clarity of the cognitive/evaluative component and the strength of the motive component? The answer is that “men proportion their affections more to the light, under which any object appears to them, than to its real and

intrinsic value” (T 3.2.7.2; SBN 534). This passage is quite striking for its reference to real and intrinsic value and evident suggestion of competing apparent value involved in the defeating desire. The idea is reiterated a few pages later in Hume’s recapitulation of the argument of the section.

There is no quality in human nature which causes more fatal errors in our conduct, than that which leads us to prefer whatever is present to the distant and remote, and makes us desire objects more according to their situation than their intrinsic value. (T 3.2.7.8; SBN 538)

Several points are worth making here regarding the apparent cognitive character of the defeating preference and the desire that should have prevailed.²⁹ As for the latter, presumably, we cannot desire objects according to their intrinsic value without representing their value, that is, representing them as of value.³⁰ This presumption is corroborated by Hume’s referring to our preference for the contiguous over the remote as the “reason why men act in contradiction to their known interest.” I take it that my known interest is what I correctly represent as constituting or promoting my good.³¹ And thus Hume must also countenance the possibility of my incorrectly representing my good or interest. That I try to get it right is no guarantee that I will. There will be cases where I fail correctly to represent the intrinsic value of a course of action, believing it to be good for me when it is not, where this error is not at the unreflective level of preferring the contiguous over the remote. Let us call a correct or incorrect representation of value at the level of acknowledged interest a judgment of prudential value to call attention to the fact that it can be correct or incorrect, true or false, if you like, and yet, even if false, not contrary to reason by the standard at work at T 2.3.3.6 (SBN 416).³² At the same time we must not forget that a judgment of prudential value is a passion. It can be contradicted by a passion and can determine the will.³³

Let us now return to that principle in human nature, our preference for the contiguous to the remote, so powerful as to overcome our strong passion for our interest and so violent as to obscure our clear knowledge of it. (Given the curiously intellectualizing tendency of Hume’s discussion I will, for the time being, treat the passion for something as in my interest and the avowal of something as in my interest as though they were distinct mental acts. As I have indicated, however, I am inclined to suppose that what we have here is a single mental act with discernible aspects, perhaps Hume’s version of Butler’s “perception of the heart or sentiment of the understanding.”) One supposes that the cognitive impairment caused by our preference for the contiguous drives the conative impairment. The judgment of prudential value constituting the avowed interest is rendered inoperative in a way that in turn weakens its conative aspect.³⁴ A judgment of prudential value regarding an object is often obscured by the proximity of the object. Of course,

the proximity of the object can only have this effect by way of representation, i.e., by appearing in a certain way. That's why Hume says that what is contiguous strikes upon us with an idea that prevails above what lies in a more obscure light. Given the contrast between the obscuring idea and the real and intrinsic value it obscures, the reader is apt to suppose that the obscuring idea is a competing representation of the object as valuable in some way, i.e., a trivial good represented as good. Apparent value obscuring real value by advantage of its situation makes more sense than pleasure obscuring real value as though by a blow to the head, even if the object appears desirable or to be of value only because of the prospect of pleasure it affords. The contiguous object appears to be of value in a way that renders inoperative our idea of the object's real worth determined by considering it at a proper distance. At one point Hume shifts to a forensic metaphor and explains the weakness as one of "yield[ing] to the solicitations of our passions, which always plead in favour of whatever is near and contiguous" (T 3.2.7.2; SBN 535). Had Hume been intent simply to contrast a non-evaluative idea of a present pleasure, for example, with an idea of value, there would be no point in referring to real and intrinsic value and personifying the passions as pleading their case.³⁵ He could have just said that the proximity of the object induces us to believe that pleasure is at hand in a way that obscures our calculations about long term pleasure and gives rise to a lurch in the direction of the object.³⁶ Moreover, at T 3.2.8.1 (SBN 539) he says that men "are always much inclined to prefer present interest to distant and remote." This again points in the direction of an evaluative passion, insofar as preferring present interest involves representing an object at hand as good.

In desiring present objects more according to their situation than their intrinsic value one desires them because of the value they appear to have which is often at odds with their actual value or the value we would ascribe to them were we to reflect on them appropriately. The proximity of the objects, the advantage of their situation, magnifies the value they appear to have. Seeing money lying on the table with no one around may issue in a preference for taking it contrary to my acknowledged interest. In such a case the sight gives rise to the idea of the value of taking it, somehow obscuring the judgment of value to the effect that my good is not promoted by such conduct. One might speculate that the judgment of prudential value is obscured by the apparent value because of temporary inferential impairment, as it were. I am prevented from seeing that taking the money, what appears of value, is conduct of the sort comprehended and rejected in the judgment of prudential value.³⁷ On the other hand,

When we consider any objects at a distance, all their minute distinctions vanish, and we always give the preference to whatever is in itself preferable, without considering its situation and circumstances. This gives rise

to what, in an improper sense, we call *reason*, which is a principle that is often contradictory to those propensities that display themselves upon the approach of the object. (T.3.2.7.5; SBN 536)

In these ideal circumstances, Hume claims, due deliberation and reflection results in preferring what one ought to prefer³⁸ in contradiction to propensities that display themselves upon the approach of the object.³⁹

Let us now pause to collect and expand the various points made to date.

- (i) Any affection that is a preference, at least in creatures with self-acknowledged interests, tracks what appears good to the agent because these affections constitute evaluative attitudes.
- (ii) Preferring x to y, therefore, includes an evaluative component, although in the case of an interested judgment of prudential value the evaluative component is comparative, while in an immediate non-reflective preference for the proximate the evaluative component is non-comparative. The apparently comparative character of preferring in the latter case pertains to motivating force rather than to evaluative content.
- (iii) The capacity for desiring and preferring what an agent acknowledges as her interest as it appears in reflection is self-love or the general appetite to good considered merely as such (T 2.3.3.8; SBN 417) and issues in what we have been calling judgments of prudential value, the normative dimension of which I will discuss in the next section.
- (iv) Immediate preferences uncorroborated by reflection correcting for the distorting power of the present, although evaluative, are not interested in the sense of incorporating the agent's view of her overall good.⁴⁰ They are not judgments of prudential value. Such preferences are typically violent passions in contrast with reflective preferences or judgments of value which are calm.
- (v) Since a passion can only contradict a passion, and a preference for the proximate is a passion, the acknowledged interest that is contradicted by the preference for the proximate must be a passion, even if it takes the form of a judgment of prudential value, for example, the judgment that it would be better for me, on the whole, not to drink that bottle of beer now.⁴¹
- (vi) The intrinsic value of a prospective course of action, i.e., the interest one has in an action as promoting one's good in general, is what, ideally, appears when we employ the method of discounting the natural bias toward the present.⁴² Such a method determines what one ought to prefer and the correct judgment of prudential value.

- (vii) In general, passions can be proportioned to a correcting standard so that what appears good is good and answers to human agents' true interests. Correcting the appearance of the value of objects present at hand, and thereby our attitudes toward the objects, is in one respect analogous to correcting the sensory appearance of objects observed in non-optimal conditions in which to an untrained eye the uncorrected shifting and momentary appearances prevail. (T 3.3.1.15,16; SBN 582).
- (viii) As a species we are disposed to prefer what is present at hand in contradiction to interests we acknowledge. On particular occasions when we prefer what is present at hand to our acknowledged interests we are moved by minimally evaluative passions that render our judgments of prudential value inoperative.

The forgoing account of preference for the contiguous contradicting acknowledged or known interests applies directly to the case of preferring one's own acknowledged lesser good by corroborating the B.2 reading. What is preferred is an object which by advantage of its situation appears to be of value in a way that obscures and renders ineffectual the agent's judgment of prudential value, her corrected evaluation of the object. The preference is evaluative but not comparative. The apparently comparative character of the preference pertains to its greater motivating force insofar as it renders the countervailing judgment of prudential value conatively ineffective. Finding immediate positive value in *x*, and wanting it in a way that overrides the contrary motive that would be provided by one's considered conception of *x*'s value, is shocking as an example of something not contrary to reason and more so than a cool (considered) preference for world-destruction over getting a scratch. Because the preference for one's own acknowledged lesser good conflicts with what is generally thought to be the agent's own reason, such a preference goes some way toward satisfying the requirement of vertical shock. The fact that the preference is evaluative and so not a case of simple weakness of will increases its apparent irrationality. Thus in preferring to drink that bottle of beer, which one acknowledges not to be in one's interest, one nevertheless desires it as something good. If one's acknowledged interest or greater good is operative at all then the agent will be subject to concurrent conflicting evaluative passions, one evaluating drinking the bottle of beer as good the other as not good. One would have conflicting evaluative attitudes motivationally directed toward the same object. Insofar as these motivating attitudes function, in part, like judgments, with one of the judgments, in fact a calm passion, issuing from what is ordinarily identified as reason, the result would certainly seem to be contrary to reason in one sense. Not only is the passion, mistaken for reason, motivationally opposed by a passion, actually or potentially, it is contradicted in content.

IV. Sanctions against Preferring One's Own Acknowledged Lesser Good

Even though the three cases Hume presents are not contrary to reason on the limited intellectual conception of it he ascribes to his philosophical opponents, we are now in a better position to inquire how, from Hume's standpoint, the agents in these cases are not as they ought to be, how they are subject to criticism. As we shall see, their preferences and choices are, as it turns out, contrary to reason on Hume's practical reconception of it. This may seem like a trivial equivocation on the word "reason." However, once it becomes clear that calm passions associated with self-love or acknowledged interest are authoritative with respect to lower level desires opposing them and that the calm passions of moral reflection are superior in their authority to interested calm passions, Hume is willing to identify such calm passions as "the reason which is able oppose our passion" (T 3.3.1.18; SBN 583) and thus nominally accommodate popular and philosophical opinion. There is danger of distraction here, however. More important than the use of the word "reason" is the claim, to be defended, that the preferences introduced as not contrary to intellectual reason turn out to be contrary to the authority and normative force of calm passions issuing from deliberation that corrects for bias of one type or another. Thus, the distinction that Butler draws between the authority and the strength of a passion recurs in Hume, if I'm right.⁴³ This view poses serious questions about the character of Hume's naturalism as understood by those who see Hume as a thoroughgoing skeptic about practical reason.⁴⁴

I will begin with the third case, preferring one's acknowledged lesser good. What I aim to show is that on Hume's view desires aimed at one's interest as determined by deliberation and corrective reflection, i.e., judgments of prudential value, have a natural authority over the uncorrected preference for the contiguous. Desiring to ψ for one's own good on a particular occasion is thereby to have a reason to ψ . Accordingly, one ought, *ceteris paribus*,⁴⁵ to ψ , despite the apparent value of a present opportunity to do something incompatible with ψ -ing. Even if the judgment of prudential value is faulty and does not constitute a preference for what is in fact preferable in itself, it is still, in this limited way, authoritative over a transient preference for a present apparent good, should there be a conflict. In ascribing this normative claim to Hume I am not merely relying on the causal/structural fact that the general appetite to good takes as input lower level passions. In defending the claim that Hume is committed to the normativity of judgments of prudential value⁴⁶ I will appeal to three kinds of evidence: (i) Hume gradually reclaims the use of "reason" to designate calm passions produced by reflection, in part, to indicate the authority or normativity of such passions; (ii) Hume explicitly speaks of mental states produced by reflecting, in accordance with general rules beyond present appearances, as having authority; and (iii)

he says that the prevalence of calm passions over the violent is a virtue, namely, strength of mind.

I will take up the last point first by beginning with a passage from the second *Enquiry* and the last paragraph of T 2.3.3.

All men, it is allowed, are equally desirous of happiness; but few are successful in the pursuit: One considerable cause is the want of STRENGTH of MIND, which might enable them to resist the temptation of present ease or pleasure, and carry them forward in the search of more distant profit and enjoyment. Our affections, on a general prospect of their objects, form certain rules of conduct, and certain measures of preference of one above another: And these decisions, though really the result of our calm passions and propensities, (for what else can pronounce any object eligible or the contrary?) are yet said, by a natural abuse of terms, to be the determinations of pure reason and reflection. But when some of these objects approach nearer to us, or acquire the advantages of favourable lights and positions, which catch the heart or imagination; our general resolutions are frequently confounded, a small enjoyment preferred, and lasting shame and sorrow entailed upon us. (EPM 6.1; SBN 239)

Men often act knowingly against their interest; for which reason, the view of the greatest possible good does not always influence them. Men often counteract a violent passion in prosecution of their interests and designs; it is not, therefore, the present uneasiness alone which determines them. In general we may observe that both these principles operate on the will; and where they are contrary, that either of them prevails, according to the general character or present disposition of the person. What we call strength of mind, implies the prevalence of the calm passions above the violent; though we may easily observe, there is no man so constantly possessed of this virtue as never on any occasion to yield to the solicitations of passion and desire. (T 2.3.3.10; SBN 418)

That strength of mind is a virtue,⁴⁷ on Hume's view, is reflected in the sentiment of approval evinced in one judiciously reflecting on the utility of a character's strength of mind. By implication, the vice of weakness of mind, irresolution and in particular preferring one's acknowledged lesser good to one's greater, is reflected in the sentiment of disapproval evinced in one reflecting, from a general standpoint, on a character so constituted. So, obviously one who prefers an acknowledged lesser good to his greater is to be criticized for the vice of weakness of mind. In the first instance the vice consists in its disutility for the agent, while the comparable virtue, strength of mind, is admirable for its usefulness. Every virtue is admirable

for its utility and agreeableness. But strength of mind also seems to be admirable because of the way that it is useful in promoting the ends of the agent, namely, by the prevalence of “rule-forming affections.” If so, we may further conclude that strength of mind, is admirable because the calm passions determining rules of conduct from reflection and the general appetite to good or self-love have authority over the violent passions. Thus, in preferring one’s acknowledged lesser good one violates those rules and acts in opposition to the authoritative passions that determine those rules.

Without pressing the point we can at least observe that the judicious spectator exercising extensive sympathy not only approves of the strong minded character for her utility, but also, one might suppose, for her immediate agreeableness to herself as the author of her actions. This, I admit, is a stretch. Strength of mind is not meritorious pride. And yet, consider the associated vice of weakness of mind and cases of preferring one’s acknowledged lesser good, in which the agent’s ends go unrealized because of contrary passions. It seems likely that the agent would be subject to disagreeable emotions which would, therefore, be reflected in one impartially considering the case with extensive sympathy. In particular one would expect to find disagreeable emotions in the family of humility, “the lasting shame and sorrow entailed upon us,” attending the failure of our authorized ends to prevail over the objects of unendorsed passions. Our approval of strength of mind would partly reflect our approval of agents as the authors of their actions.

Hume’s reference to obligations of interest also has a bearing on strength of mind. Hume says that we have a natural obligation of interest both to justice and to the maintenance of government.⁴⁸ This is a consequence of three Hobbesian claims: justice as a system promotes the good of each agent; government is a necessary condition of justice; and each individual ought to do what promotes his or her own good. But this latter can only be a practical principle if an agent has, *prima facie*, an obligation to do what he or she fallibly endorses as promoting his or her own good, a version of the Hypothetical Imperative. An agent has, *prima facie*, reason to do what she sees as promoting her interests. Hobbes and Butler saw this. I presume Hume did as well. In that case, he would also recognize that if in preferring an acknowledged lesser good an agent fails to do what she acknowledges as promoting her good, then she would fail to meet that obligation. A sensible knave may incorrectly identify his interest with the acquisition of worthless toys and gewgaws, but still have a defeasible reason to undertake means to that end in the face of tempting distractions of the moment.

I now turn to two other considerations offering more direct support for the claim that, for Hume, not only is preferring one’s acknowledged lesser good subject to criticism as a vice, but it is also contrary to reason reconceived to accommodate agency. Despite Hume’s polemic against truth-targeted reason as a practical faculty, he indicates in several places that “reason” can be used to refer to a practical

faculty once it is reconceived as the source of calm passions issuing from corrective reflection. The rehabilitation of reason begins negatively at T 2.3.3.7–8 (SBN 417–8) where Hume explains that the mistake of supposing that reason can oppose passion naturally arises from confusing the determination of the will by calm passions with the quiet operation of our intellectual faculties.⁴⁹ He then recasts strength of mind or counter-acting violent passions in prosecution of one's interest and designs as the prevalence of the calm passions over the violent. In concluding his discussion of the will he summarizes this point:

It may not be improper, before we leave this subject of the will, to resume, in a few words, all that has been said concerning it, in order to set the whole more distinctly before the eyes of the reader. What we commonly understand by *passion* is a violent and sensible emotion of mind, when any good or evil is presented, or any object, which, by the original formation of our faculties, is fitted to excite an appetite. By *reason* we mean affections of the very same kind with the former, but such as operate more calmly, and cause no disorder in the temper: which tranquillity leads us into a mistake concerning them, and causes us to regard them as conclusions only of our intellectual faculties. (T 2.3.8.13; SBN 437)

Here, it is true, he is still correcting popular and philosophical misconceptions about two kinds of passion. But there is a Janus-like character in this correction. One can read him as claiming that there is no such thing as practical reason or that practical reason when properly understood is the determination of the will by calm passions. Clearly, his continuing chief concern is that calm passions not be mistaken for conclusions of our motivationally inert intellectual faculties. In a later passage he seems to be leaning toward the eliminativist reading:

When we consider any objects at a distance, all their minute distinctions vanish, and we always give the preference to whatever is in itself preferable, without considering its situation and circumstances. This gives rise to what, in an improper sense, we call *reason*, which is a principle that is often contradictory to those propensities that display themselves upon the approach of the object. (T 3.2.7.5; SBN 536)

However, at T 3.3.1.18 (SBN 583) he speaks as though he has fully rehabilitated the use of the term:

This language will be easily understood, if we consider what we formerly said concerning that *reason* which is able to oppose our passion, and which we have found to be nothing but a general calm determination

of the passions, founded on some distant view or reflection. (T 3.3.1.18; SBN 583)

Although he is here clearly talking specifically about moral, rather than prudential, motivation, there is no earlier reference to the reason that can oppose passion other than the interested reason we have been discussing. One might suppose then that Hume is now simply announcing that just as interested calm passions free from the perspectival distortion of contiguity are functions of a kind of reason capable of opposing lower level passions, so too, impartial calm passions free from the perspectival distortion of self and interest are functions of a kind of reason capable of opposing passions including otherwise calm interested ones.⁵⁰ Clearly, what they share in common is that they are capacities combining (i) the disposition to form judgments of value by reflecting on how objects would appear in circumstances constructed to correct for partiality of some sort with (ii) the disposition to be appropriately motivated⁵¹ in ways that may and ought to determine the will in the face of an opposing passion. These functions of the reason that is able to oppose passion differ with respect to the kind of impartiality of viewpoint and object of reflection. In the one case the object is one's own good and the impartiality of the viewpoint, as we have seen, corrects for the bias toward the present. In the other case the object is a character viewed in abstraction from the effects on one's own particular interests. Just as in weakness of mind, where passions fail to yield to corrective calm passions issuing from reflection, so too calm passions issuing from the disinterested point of view may fail to dominate opposing passions, interested or otherwise. Authority is no guarantee of superior motivational strength.

But however the general principle of our blame or praise may be corrected by those other principles, it is certain they are not altogether efficacious, nor do our passions often correspond entirely to the present theory. It is seldom men heartily love what lies at a distance from them, and what no way redounds to their particular benefit; as it is no less rare to meet with persons who can pardon another any opposition he makes to their interest, however justifiable that opposition may be by the general rules of morality. Here we are contented with saying, that reason requires such an impartial conduct, but that it is seldom we can bring ourselves to it, and that our passions do not readily follow the determination of our judgment. (T 3.3.1.18; SBN 583)

Here it is important to note the normative character of non-intellectual reason as a source of evaluation. It requires impartial conduct.⁵² The calm passions corresponding to proper moral evaluation are authoritative whether or not our conduct conforms to them. Without pursuing the general issue of the regulative

function of moral evaluation in determining the will, it is sufficient to observe the following. Interested calm passions do determine the will when not thwarted by opposing passions. Interested calm passions are, according to the assimilation implied by the quoted passage, operations of reason, and therefore, as products of reason thus reconfigured have a normative claim on our conduct. In acting on a violent passion opposing an interested calm passion, one is acting contrary to what one ought to do, contrary to what one has (internal) reason to do.

It is important to realize that in these cases of prudential and distinctively moral judgments Hume is not simply extending the application of the term "reason" to sentiments or calm passions that are influenced by the operations of a proper intellectual capacity falling on the side of reason in the earlier polarity of reason and passion. All passions are influenced by causal reasoning in this sense. The distant view or reflection upon which the calm determination of the passions is founded does depend on factual reasoning of the understanding. However, the distant view in question and the calm passions it determines are moments in a method that partly defines the two kinds of practical judgment at issue.⁵³ We are disposed to take up the more general standpoint as a way of correcting for limited generosity and partiality to the contiguous. It is part of our capacity for calm interested passions and disinterested moral sentiments that we be able to conform to the deliberative norm requiring the more general viewpoint. Hume brings evaluative judgments/calm passions back into the fold of reason not because they involve deductive or causal reasoning, the hitherto only two modes of reason sanctioned by him; he brings them back into the fold of reason because of their authority, which is linked to a steady and general viewpoint correcting for bias.

Butler simply asserts the relative authority of interested calm passions and absolute authority of conscience on the strength of teleological analogies and the idea of autonomy. On Hume's view a calm interested passion is authoritative relative to a conflicting desire for the contiguous insofar as it arises in conformity to a deliberative norm: make sure that in evaluating what to do to correct for the partiality toward the present. The generality of the considerations or distant view does not by itself confer normative status on the interested calm passion produced. It is rather that the enlarged perspective makes it possible to determine what is preferable in itself and to settle the just value of a prospective course of action.

To shore up this claim regarding the authority of interested calm passions let me briefly, partly by way of review, turn to the authority Hume generally associates with the products of reflective standpoints and general considerations.⁵⁴ As Hume himself notes, anticipating the points we have come upon,

[i]t 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. . . . The passions are often vary'd by very inconsiderable principles and these do not often play with a perfect regularity, especially on the first trial. But as custom and practice have brought to light all these principles, and have settled the just value of everything; this must certainly contribute to the easy production of the passions, and guide us by means of general established maxims, in the proportions we ought to observe in preferring one object to another. (T 2.1.6.9; SBN 293–4)

In the broader context of the passage at T 3.3.1.18 (SBN 583) we have just been considering, Hume is concerned to show how his system can accommodate the claim that virtue in rags is virtue nonetheless and that virtue whose consequences affect us directly is not thereby more estimable. He invokes the principle that “general rules create a species of probability, which sometimes influences the judgment, and always the imagination” (T 3.3.1.20; SBN 585). In this context the idea is that we are perfectly able to infer the beneficial effect a virtuous character would have, despite circumstances hindering its realization. In forming a moral judgment we do and ought to rely on such an inference. The general rule in this case corrects for the bias toward the fully realized, just as the method of extensive sympathy corrects for partiality in forming moral judgments.⁵⁵ In each case, however, “the passions do not always follow our corrections; but these corrections serve sufficiently to regulate our abstract notions, and are alone regarded, when we pronounce in general concerning the degrees of virtue and vice.” Here the thought is that our moral judgment/sentiment is⁵⁶ guided by a certain view of the facts and so, in some sense, should our non-moral passions.⁵⁷ That is, certain considerations involving general rules constitute reasons for judging that a certain character is virtuous, i.e., for feeling the sentiment of moral approval and esteem, and for having certain non-moral feelings toward the object of the judgment, whether we have such feelings or not.

At T 3.3.1.16 (SBN 582) Hume explicitly compares the corrections we make in our moral assessment of characters to those we make regarding the variability of the sensory appearances of objects.⁵⁸ Without changing, an object varies in appearance due to the circumstances of perception. Mature perceptual judgments factor for this variability. Similarly, proper moral assessments correct for the temporal nearness or remoteness of the character under consideration.

Our servant, if diligent and faithful, may excite stronger sentiments of love and kindness than Marcus Brutus, as represented in history; but we say not, upon that account, that the former character is more laudable than the latter. We know that, were we to approach equally near to that renowned patriot, he would command a much higher degree of affection

and admiration. Such corrections are common with regard to all the senses. (T 3.3.1.16; SBN 582)

The discussion of general rules and their influence on imagination and judgment is one Hume begins much earlier in the *Treatise*.⁵⁹ At T 1.3.13.7–12 (SBN 146–50) he distinguishes between general rules of the sort that may lead to false judgment and rules of the sort that correct the mistakes caused by the former. The former sort, being a reflection of simple belief formation through unreflective custom and habit, accounts for prejudice, other causal inferences based on accidental circumstances, and undue influence on the imagination and passions due to partial resemblance. In illustration of the last, Hume describes the case of a man who, suspended in a cage from a considerable height, trembles with fear despite knowing that he is perfectly safe. The associated ideas of depth, descent, and death run away with his imagination causing fear of falling. This in turn reinforces the idea of descent and harm setting up a self-sustaining loop that opposes the knowledge that ought to give him perfect security. It is not clear whether Hume is supposing that two opposing occurrent beliefs differ in degree of assent. or that the knowledge is either inoperative or oscillating, so to speak.⁶⁰ What is clear, however, is that since the knowledge issues from a wider consideration of what is causally relevant, since it represents “the more general and authentic operations of the understanding,” Hume supposes that the man in the cage has reason to feel safe. His belief that he is safe is a reason to feel safe and not to imagine otherwise. To tremble in fear in these circumstances, although perfectly understandable, is contrary to the judgment regulated by the general rules for determining what causes what.⁶¹ And although Hume is eager to observe that judgments so regulated are experienced-based natural extensions of the unphilosophical probabilities they correct, he is equally eager to insist on their authority and superior credibility. Hume observes regarding the two sorts of general rules, those influencing the imagination and passions of the man in the suspended cage and those influencing his judgment, that “[t]he vulgar are commonly guided by the first, and wise men by the second” (T 1.3.13.12; SBN 150). I take it that interested calm passions founded on a distant view have a comparable authority over violent unreasoned passions. Again, the authority does not consist in the generality or distance by itself, but rather in the correctness of evaluation made possible by the shift in perspective.

V. Scratches and Sacrifice Again

Let us now return to the first two phenomena Hume offers as not contrary to reason, the agent who has promoted keeping his finger scratch-free to the status of chief end trumping all competitors and interests of others and his mirror image, the agent dedicated exclusively to providing trivial goods to strangers until his

resources give out. To what sort of criticism are such characters subject? We may approach the question by again considering strength of mind. As we have seen, it is a virtue to be generally disposed to act on one's calm interested passions in the face of opposing unreflective desires. And thus one ought, *prima facie*, to act on one's calm interested passions. An agent has, *prima facie*, reason to do what she sees as promoting her end as determined by the calm passion of cool self-love. This end is the source of the *prima facie* reasonableness of her prospective courses of action because the fallible calm passion that determines it has the authority of "that reason, which is able to oppose our passion." In this sense it is contrary to reason to act on opposing unreflective desires. Given the cool preference reading of the character with the scratch-free finger and the selfless anonymous benefactor, one may suppose that in each case the content of the calm interested passion or judgment of value is of the form, " ψ -ing is an end to be pursued to the exclusion of everything else" and that each character possesses strength of mind. And thus their preferences and choices in this regard are not contrary to reason. They are the authors of their actions and their ends provide them with reasons for what they do.

Our approval of their strength of mind, however, is not unconditional. It depends on the correct estimation of the value of the designs and ends informing the strong agent's conception of his or her interest. In the case of foolish selfishness and foolish selflessness our limited approval of strength of mind is outranked by our disapproval of the ends which such strength serves. Our disapproval, resting in part on the authority of custom and practice (T 2.1.6.9; SBN 294), represents an objective judgment of prudential value contradicting the judgments of the abnormal agents. Agents have a natural obligation of interest⁶² that goes beyond subordinating the passing parade of desires for objects present at hand to those preferences the agent happens to identify as her interest. Representative of objective prudential reason is our disapproval of one whose dominant end is keeping her finger scratch-free is authoritative, whether or not she shares it.⁶³ Moreover, the abnormal agents Hume presents are also subject to distinctively moral criticism. One who promotes keeping his finger scratch-free to the exclusion of other considerations not only fails to act in accordance with his genuine interest and thus acts in violation of his natural obligation of interest, but disregards the interests of others in a blameworthy manner in violation of his moral obligation. The preferences of such a character are contrary to the moral sentiments of one surveying them with extensive sympathy that corrects for partiality.

It is important here to draw attention to the different dimensions of authority of practical judgments: (a) the subjective authority of the agent's interest, as he or she conceives it, over lower level desires and preferences not included in that conception; (b) the superior, objective authority of the agent's genuine interest, however she may misrepresent it;⁶⁴ and (c) the objective authority of moral

judgment as determined through the method of impartial extensive sympathy. Actions violating any of the three renders an agent subject to criticism,⁶⁵ in particular, to the charge of acting contrary to reason reconceived in the practical sphere. This is because reason, now identified as the capacity for corrective calm passions, is the source of the various kinds of authority represented by (a), (b), and (c).⁶⁶ In our cases both (b) and (c) are at work. For our authoritative disapproval rests on recognizing (i) that neither the dominant end of keeping one's finger scratch free nor the dominant end of allocating all one's resources to provide trivial goods to strangers who are able to provide them for themselves have the value imputed to them by the abnormal agents, and (ii) that the disregard of the genuine interests of others and the culpable disregard of one's own interest are vices. It is one thing to be subject to gusts of violent passion that blow one off course. It is another to have a foolish aim that fails either to include proper regard for others or proper regard for oneself. The agents in these cases are not blameworthy because their calm passions and preferences are overpowered by violent disruptive desires for objects they regard as lesser goods. Rather, they are blameworthy because what they pursue as good is not intrinsically preferable to what they forgo, irrespective of their positive subjective evaluation. Their judgments of value are incorrect and lead to errors of conduct. Even if the subjective evaluative perspective is itself authoritative with respect to the parade of opportunistic desires, it is trumped by the authority of objective judgments of value.⁶⁷

NOTES

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1 Citations refer to *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and to the corresponding pages in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed., revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

2 Annette Baier briefly discusses two of the cases in her book, *A Progress of Sentiments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 164–6. See also Tito Magri “Natural Obligation and Normative Motivation in Hume’s *Treatise*,” *Hume Studies* 26 (1996): 231–53, 242; Jean Hampton, “Does Hume Have an Instrumental Conception of Practical Reason?” *Hume Studies* 21 (1995): 57–74, 63–4; Christine Korsgaard, “The Normativity of Instrumental Reason,” in *Ethics and Practical Reason*, ed. G. Cullity and B. Gaut (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 226–7; and J. L. Mackie, *Hume’s Moral Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 46.

3 This neglect is further explained, I suspect, from the common reading of the preceding equally notorious argument at T 2.3.3.5 (SBN 415) whose conclusion Hume illustrates with the notorious cases. For example, Terence Penelhum speaks of the view as “this wildly implausible denial of the intentionality of passions and desires” (“Hume’s Moral Psychology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, ed. David Fate Norton, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 128). I imagine the reasoning to be this. According to the argument, passions, and therefore preferences, are never themselves contrary to reason because they have no proper intentional objects, propositional or otherwise. They are original existences or modifications of existences possessed of no representative character. So why bother to figure out in greater detail what the strange preferences are? They are just blind impulses whose relational character pertains to motivating strength and whose directedness, such as it is, somehow piggy-backs on the content of beliefs in the causal neighborhood.

I argue elsewhere (Cass Weller “The Myth of Original Existence,” *Hume Studies* 28 [2002]: 195–230) that this common reading is mistaken. The premise that guides my heterodox reading is that all Hume needs to get to his conclusion validly is the claim that passions such as anger and desire are not assertions, not that they have no intentional content of their own, propositional or otherwise. My desire for a glass of water is my desire to be drinking a glass of water. Such a desire has a propositional object but is not an assertion of it. John Bricke (*Mind and Morality: An Examination of Hume’s Moral Psychology* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996]) holds a similar view.

4 Indeed, there is much to be gained in comparing Hume’s principles of motivation with Butler’s. See Joseph Butler, *Five Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*, ed. Stephen L. Darwall (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983). Three elements in Hume’s theory—violent passions, the general appetite to good (subject to correction through due reflection), and approbation and disapprobation from a steady and general viewpoint—correspond closely to three elements—particular affections, self-love, and conscience—in Butler’s. I view Hume as self-consciously improving on Butler’s account by (i) purging it of rationalist and theological remnants and (ii) tying the faculties of self-love and conscience explicitly to methods for correcting for bias toward the present in the case of self-love and bias toward oneself in the case of conscience, methods themselves subject to reflective endorsement.

5 I generally align myself with the commentators who, in the tradition of Kemp Smith, see Hume as a naturalist opposing intellectualist conceptions of theoretical and practical reason rather than either a serious and despairing skeptic or a taunting one delighting in wanton sallies and sportive assaults. For proponents of nonskeptical readings of Hume, see Baier and, more recently, Elizabeth Radcliffe, “Kantian Tunes on a Humean Instrument,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 27 (1997): 247–70, Magri, and Marcia Homiak, “Hume Ethics: Ancient or Modern?” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 81 (2000): 215–36. My view overlaps with Magri’s on several points, especially regarding the selection of passages from the *Treatise*. We differ, I believe, regarding how the normativity of reasoned calm passions fits into Hume’s naturalistic framework. Baier’s discussion of the enlarged role for reason in the last chapter of her book is one I find congenial, although she emphasizes the art of judgment and political community as central in Hume’s reclamation of practical reason. My approach is more fine-grained and focused on the generality of reflective standpoints and emphasizes Hume’s affinity to Butler.

For defenders of skeptical readings see Hampton, Elijah Millgram, “Was Hume a Humean?” *Hume Studies* 21 (1995): 75–93, and Korsgaard. These authors argue that on Hume’s view an agent who fails to will the acknowledged means to a given end while still endorsing that end violates no norm and is subject to no criticism. Assessing these views, something I do not propose to undertake here, first requires discussion of (i) whether the form of hypothetical imperatives is “Let him who wills end E will action M” or “Let him who wills E perform action M,” (ii) whether it is possible to commit oneself to an end and be unmoved by considerations that will realize that end while still committed to it, and (iii) whether Hume believes (ii). For a discussion of (ii) see Peter Railton, “Hypothetical Imperatives,” in Cullity and Gaut.

6 What I see as Hume’s attempts in Books 2 and 3 to reconfigure practical reason is parallel, I claim, to what I take to be his attempt to reconfigure theoretical reason in Book 1. There he argues that inferences from the observed to the unobserved are not products of rationalist REASON, yet he continues to regard such inferences as cases of reasoning subject to norms. For authors who argue that Hume does not take his discovery that inferences to the unobserved are not produced by reason to entail that they are unreasonable, see Baier, *Progress of the Sentiments*, Don Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume’s Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), and David Owen, *Hume’s Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Hume also argues that moral judgments and action-guiding judgments of interest are not products of rationalist REASON nor of Humean causal reasoning. They are, however, in proper circumstances, expressions of calm passions having the authority otherwise attributed by Hume’s rationalist opponents to REASON.

7 The idea is threefold. First, as I argue in Weller, “Myth of Original Existence,” passions have intentional objects and are neither mere conative vectors nor mere feelings of pleasure or pain triggered by doxastic episodes in the causal neighborhood. They are attitudes toward objects. Second, in the case of the sentiment of moral approval the feeling of approbation of character, *c*, constitutes the judgment that character *c* is virtuous. Third, since “men are often governed by their duties, and are deterred from some actions by the opinion of injustice, and impelled to others by that of obligation” (T 3.1.1.5; SBN 457), I take it that in first person deliberative contexts the sentiment of moral disapproval toward a prospective course of action is both a conative as well as evaluative attitude toward the course of action. So too, the interested calm passions of the weak and strong-minded are motivating attitudes of approval toward a course of action that constitutes an acknowledgement of interest. The explicit judgment “My good lies this way not that way” is the expression in doxastic form of the motivating attitude of approval.

I am grappling with Hume’s doctrine that value is imputed by sentiment not discerned by the understanding on the ground that judgments of value motivate and only sentiments motivate. Thus to adopt something as an ultimate end, i.e., as one’s good or as partially constitutive of one’s good, is to have a motivating sentiment of approval toward it. This much I take to be uncontroversial as a reading of T 2.3.3, (SBN 413–8) and the 2nd *Enquiry*, EPM App. 1.18–9 (SBN 293). Citations refer to *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) and to the corresponding pages in *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd ed., revised by P. H. Nidditch, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). So I take *S*’s avowal of interest, what one

would ordinarily treat as S's belief that something constitutes her good, as the cognitive appearance or expression of an affective attitude. I think it would be a mistake, as a reading of Hume, to treat 'I acknowledge x as my greater good' as merely reporting my pleasant feelings toward x or expressing a factual belief about x as a source of pleasure. For similar reasons S's uttering "That man is vicious for beating his horse" expresses S's moral disapproval of the man for beating his horse. It does not merely report the uneasiness occasioned in S by witnessing the beating.

I obviously cannot adequately develop and defend these claims here as it would require a detailed examination of Hume's account of (i) evaluative judgment in general, (ii) moral judgments both in non-deliberative assessments of character and in first person deliberative contexts, and (iii) judgments of prudential interest in both the first and third person. Finally, a discussion of the philosophical merits of this form of expressivism, whatever it turns out to be, would be in order.

8 One reason for preferring this variant is that it makes the first two cases parallel by treating a scratch on one's finger as an instance of a trivial inconvenience to oneself thereby matching the indeterminate character of the least uneasiness to a person wholly unknown.

9 The very outrageousness of being motivated to pursue as better what one acknowledges as worse as an example of a preference not contrary to reason ought to make this reading attractive to those intent on finding Hume to be a radical skeptic about practical reason.

10 This seems to be the standard way of reading the passage. See Baier, 264–6, and Hampton, 63–6, for examples.

11 It is evident, passions influence not the will in proportion to their violence, or the disorder they occasion in the temper; but, on the contrary, that when a passion has once become a settled principle of action, and is the predominant inclination of the soul, it commonly produces no longer any sensible agitation. As repeated custom and its own force have made every thing yield to it, it directs the actions and conduct without that opposition and emotion which so naturally attend every momentary gust of passion. (T 2.3.4.1; SBN 419)

12 Darwall, *Sermon 4*, 47. Although Hume does not typically use the expression "self-love" in the *Treatise*, it does appear at T 3.2.8.5 (SBN 543). He also speaks of the passion of self-interest and of the interested affection at T 3.2.2.13 (SBN 492).

13 One might suppose, as pointed out to me by an anonymous referee, that the conception of self-interest at work in the cool preference readings admits of a hedonist construal. And indeed there is a certain tendency in Hume, even more explicit in Butler, to regard the object of self love to be maximizing one's pleasure or the satisfaction of lower level propensities. If the hedonism is an empirical claim identifying what is good and what is pleasant, then an agent's good or interest lies in whatever yields the most pleasure in the long run, whether or not the agent accepts the identity. If the hedonism in view is a meaning claim to the effect that the "thinking better" involved in preference and choice is identical to "thinking more pleasant in the long run," then in acknowledging that keeping one's finger scratch free is a greater good than preserving the world one gives expression to the belief that there is greater overall pleasure (or better, less overall pain) in destroying the world than in getting a scratch. In either case

there would be a fallible judgment of fact leading one to conclude that Hume failed to understand the clear dialectical point of his own examples, namely, that where a passion is not informed by a false belief it is not contrary to reason. The point would be spoiled if the *outré* preferences and choices were backed by questionable judgments of fact, which they surely would be. The sentence introducing the three notorious cases is: “Where a passion is neither founded on false suppositions nor chuses means insufficient for the end, the understanding can neither justify nor condemn it.” The last sentence in the paragraph is: “In short, a passion must be accompany’d with some false judgment, in order to its being unreasonable; and even then ’tis not the passion, properly speaking, which is unreasonable, but the judgment.” Some, holding hedonism fixed, might take this as a reason to reject the cool preference reading. I discuss this below in note 18.

14 Baier, 165, entertains the idea that preferring the destruction of the world to getting a scratch on the finger is a case of weakness, “a regrettable prevalence of violent over calm passions.”

15 The analogue in Butler to preferences so construed are particular passions. He typically characterizes these passions by contrasting them with the interested passions of self-love with which they can conflict as part of his ongoing criticism of Hobbes. Indeed in the second appendix of the second *Enquiry* (EPM App. 2.12–3; SBN 301–2) Hume wholly appropriates, without acknowledgement, Butler’s arguments (Darwall, Preface, 20; *Sermon* 4, 47) and speaks of original propensities, original affections, and primary appetites in contrast to the secondary passions of self-love.

16 The phrase “weakness of will,” useful as it is for locating the first form of weakness, will of course irritate some readers of Hume. The defeat through unruly violent passions of the calm passion comprehending one’s considered conception of the good is, by implication, weakness of mind according to Hume (T 2.3.3.10; SBN 418). Since he limits acts of will to “the internal impression we feel, and are conscious of, when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body, or new perception of our mind” (T 2.3.1.1; SBN 399), it is not clear that under this limiting definition there are cases of weakness of will.

17 The comparative judgment of value, of course, pertains to whatever is involved in acknowledging as a lesser good the object of preference and not to the passion constituting the preference.

18 Let me anticipate a defense of the B readings based on the assumption that Hume accepts hedonism of some sort. As I argued in endnote 13, on the assumption of hedonism, construed empirically or conceptually, preferences as comparative judgments of value of the form “*a* is better than *b*” will be reduced to passions backed by matter of factual beliefs of the form “*a* yields more overall pleasure than *b*.” So preferring the destruction of the world to a scratch on the finger will be backed by the dubious factual claim that there is more overall pleasure or less pain for the agent as a consequence of the destruction of the world than there is in getting a scratch on a finger. But the preferences that Hume displays as not contrary to reason are not supposed to be contrary to reason even in the extended sense of being backed by a false supposition of existence, causal matters of fact, or mathematics. Pending other factors favoring the cool preference readings over the B readings, I take this to be good reason not to ascribe hedonism to Hume. Others holding the ascription of hedonism fixed might

well conclude, instead, that preferring world-destruction to a scratched finger involves no comparative judgment of value to be reduced to a belief about overall pleasure but, rather, is a desire for scratch-free fingers which is motivationally stronger than the desire to prevent world-destruction. The preference might then be further construed as a conceptually blind impulse causally triggered by the guiding beliefs that keeping one's finger scratch-free is good, i.e., pleasant, and that doing thus and so now or refraining therefrom will prevent a scratch. On the other hand, the preference might be more liberally construed as including the propositional idea that a scratch-free finger is good, i.e., is pleasant. In either case the scope of the judgment is limited to the pain of a scratch or the pleasure of scratchlessness isolated from other considerations. One sees in ψ -ing the prospect both of saving the world and getting a scratch. The idea of pain associated with getting a scratch appears. The desire not to ψ arises and determines the will.

Rather than take on the distracting task of arguing directly against the presumption of hedonism in Hume, I propose, instead, to offer reasons against accepting the B readings of the first two cases. As a collateral benefit I will thereby have provided some indirect evidence against the presumption.

19 It is worth pointing out that it is Hume who in the very first sentence of section 3 (T 2.3.3.1; SBN 413) speaks of philosophers giving the preference to reason in the supposed combat between reason and passion.

20 One might object that since Hume has just shown that (i) passions have no propositional content and are not judgments of any sort and (ii) that preferences are passions, a preference, according to Hume, cannot be, or be expressed by, a judgment of any sort. But I have already rejected (i).

21 Taken in isolation B readings of the first two cases also seem to violate the requirement of Shock.

22 On neither an A nor a B reading is choosing one's total ruin to provide trivial goods to strangers a case where an agent lacks the principle of self-love.

23 See Homiak for a discussion of Hume's deliberative account of practical judgment.

24 As a partial down-payment consider this claim at T 2.3.4.1 (SBN 419). "Both these kinds of passions [calm and violent] pursue good and avoid evil." Here, since we are not alerted to the contrary, we must suppose that the objects of both these passions must appear in an evaluative guise. It is true that earlier at T 2.1.1.4 (SBN 276–7) Hume characterizes desire and aversion as direct passions that "arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure." I do not, however, regard this as an invitation to reductively identify thinking good with thinking pleasurable.

25 On the other hand, the fact that reason is represented in the agent's acknowledging his lesser and greater good might well indicate an extreme case of a preference contrary to reason on the popular and philosophical conception of it. The first two cases are contrary to reason from an external standpoint, whereas the third case is contrary to the self-conscious reason of the agent. I will develop this point later.

26 Of course one could appeal to the uniformity requirement and insist on either A readings for all three cases or B readings for all three cases. One could then cite the

ordinariness requirement for the third case and dismiss all the A readings but only by violating Difference and Vertical Shock.

27 The fact that I have endorsed A readings of Scratchfree and Self-sacrifice in no way precludes accepting a B reading of preferring one's acknowledged lesser good. That is in fact exactly what I do.

28 Actually the neighboring field of T 2.3.4.1 (SBN 419) does advert to the theme of the influence on the passions of the situation of their objects. However, there Hume's main concern is with causes of violent passions and not with the opposition between one's acknowledged interest and a contrary preference.

29 My discussion presumes that one possessed of strength of mind corrects for the distortion of proximity and acts accordingly. Hume says as much in the 2nd *Enquiry* version of the idea at the beginning of section 4.

Had every man sufficient sagacity to perceive, at all times, the strong interest, which binds him to the observance of justice and equity, and strength of mind sufficient to persevere in a steady adherence to a general and a distant interest, in opposition to the allurements of present pleasure and advantage; there had never, in that case, been any such thing as government or political society, but each man, following his natural liberty, had lived in entire peace and harmony with all others. (EPM 4.1; SBN 205)

The idea is also repeated in greater generality in section 6, which I quote at length on page 66. When at T 3.2.7.5 (SBN 536) he speaks of our preference for the contiguous to the remote as a natural infirmity for which there is no remedy, I see no inconsistency. Our preference for the contiguous over the remote is a standing condition, a disposition to prefer the contiguous to the remote. And though we may, some of us at least, develop strength of mind, we do not thereby become invulnerable to temptation. On those occasions we prefer a contiguous acknowledged lesser good to our greater, despite our best efforts.

30 I realize that talk of representing objects as of value can be misleading as it suggests that values are objects of the understanding. I can only plead that I am following the lead of Hume's intellectualizing language and suggest that such talk can be translated back into the language of evaluative passions.

31 The presumption that we desire objects according to their intrinsic value only if we represent them as of value can be defeated. On a sufficiently rich teleological conception creatures can act on desires according to the intrinsic value of the objects without conceiving of the objects as valuable. It is possible to be responsive to what is valuable without representing it as valuable just as on Hume's view it is possible to infer the unobserved from the observed without having developed the ability to recognize it as an inference. But Hume is very explicit about the case of inference and there is no warning at all that when he speaks of desiring objects according to their intrinsic value, the expression "intrinsic value" occurs in a referentially transparent position as would be required by a hedonist reading of the passage.

32 Note once again that if judgments of prudential value were subject to hedonist reduction so that thinking good is thinking pleasurable then the judgment of value

involved in coolly preferring the destruction of the world to a scratch on the finger would likely be contrary to reason because of a false belief of fact.

33 As I indicated in endnote 7 above, an explicit first-person judgment of interest is a reflection of a calm passion that is both conative and evaluative.

34 One supposes that the conative character of the passion is weakened as a function of the obscurity of the judgment of value.

35 One might try to evade this point by insisting that the reference to value is, so to speak, transparent. The idea of value obscured by the prospect of the present pleasure is simply the belief that there is more pleasure over time in forgoing the present opportunity for pleasure. Note, however, that in speaking of a contiguous and remote object Hume says that “tho’ we may be fully convinc’d that the latter object excels the former, we are not able to regulate our actions by this judgment.” From the context of the passage the respect in which we judge the one to excel the other is real and intrinsic value. The burden falls on one who would see the reductive identification of thinking better with thinking more pleasurable peeking out of every corner of the *Treatise*. In any case I certainly do not mean to insist that on Hume’s view every desire is evaluative. I am only claiming that in the face of an acknowledged interest a competing preference for the proximate is evaluative.

36 But then the preference for the contiguous would be contrary to reason in the extended sense because it would be based on a false supposition of fact.

37 Again, one can only marvel at the unexpectedly intellectualizing character of Hume’s account. Bias toward the present can obscure one’s knowledge of his interest. The appearance of value in proximate objects can be corrected by due impartial reflection. If the relevant analogy is to sensory appearances (T 3.3.1.15,16; SBN 582), which can be trained and corrected by practice and supplemented by the imagination, then it is a question whether there are conflicting concurrent appearances as opposed to oscillating appearances. If by due reflection an agent decides against drinking that bottle of beer because of how its value now appears after deliberation, what has become of the rival appearance? On the other hand, the cognitive language of obscuring suggests either that one is unable to see the application of a general principle or that one fails to move from an all things considered judgment to a motivating all out judgment.

38 This claim must be qualified in recognition of the fact that correcting for proximity is not sufficient. Earlier at T 2.1.6.9 (SBN 294) Hume clearly indicates another dimension for determining what one ought to prefer, namely, “custom and practice [which] have brought to light all these principles and have settled the just value of everything.”

39 Again it is not exactly clear how these propensities are contradicted by the “rational” preference, whether at the level of concurrent passions or counterfactually, whether conatively or evaluatively.

40 Hume seems to retreat from this view at T 3.2.8.1 (SBN 539) where he says that men “are always much inclined to prefer present interest to distant and remote.” However, I do not think we need to take preferring present interest as a judgment of value regarding one’s overall good. In any case I welcome the passage as corroboration of the evaluative character of unreflective preferences. On the other hand, as already noted, in Appendix 2 of the second *Enquiry* (EPM App. 2.12; SBN 301) Hume advances

one of Butler's familiar arguments against Hobbes (Darwall, Preface, 20; *Sermon* 4, 47). The key premise is that the motive of interest is higher order and to be distinguished from particular passions, which do not have the agent's pleasure as their object. In this context it is not clear whether the original passions by which an agent pursues objects as ends without reference to her interest are evaluative in the way I have argued that preferring the contiguous to the remote is. It is, however, unlikely that they are, despite what one might take as implications of the Butler's use of the term "end."

41 The precise nature of the contradiction is somewhat difficult to pin down. There is both evaluative and conative incompatibility. On the one hand, the judgment of value denies the pre-reflective assessment of value. What appears good is judged merely to appear good when considered in an unbiased light. On the other hand, the conative direction of the judgment of value is opposite that of the contradicting preference for the proximate. One is moved both to indulge and refrain. Hume certainly countenances such a contrariety of concurrent passions at T 2.3.4.5 (SBN 421). The difficulty is that Hume treats the lower level preference as obscuring our cognitive purchase on the value of the object on offer so that the opposition, whether cognitive or conative, is not fully realized.

42 This claim must be qualified to reflect the fact that one with abnormal ends might well properly correct for proximity in her evaluations but still not prefer what is preferable in itself.

43 Such an action [one that goes against cool self-love] then being unnatural; and its being so not arising from a man's going against a principle or desire barely, nor in going against that principle or desire which happens for the present to be strongest; it necessarily follows, that there must be some other difference or distinction to be made between these two principles, passion and cool self-love, than what I have yet taken notice of. And this difference, not being a difference in strength or degree, I call a difference in nature and in kind. And since, in the instance still before us, if passion prevails over self-love, the consequent action is unnatural; but if self-love prevails over passion, the action is natural: it is manifest that self-love is in human nature a superior principle to passion. This may be contradicted without violating that nature; but the former cannot. So that, if we will act conformably to the economy of man's nature, reasonable self-love must govern. Thus, without particular consideration of conscience, we may have a clear conception of the superior nature of one inward principle to another; and see that there really is this natural superiority, quite distinct from degrees of strength and prevalency. (Darwall, *Sermon* 2, 38–9)

44 See Millgram and Hampton.

45 Other things are not equal when a judgment of prudential value is incorrect or violates a moral principle acknowledged by the agent or not.

46 I do not here take up the task of assessing how Hume's commitment to normativity in the practical sphere fits with his naturalism.

47 We must, of course, suppose that strength of mind is an unmixed virtue only if the ends it serves are not vicious. I take this point up below on page 36 ff.

48 See T 3.2.2.23, 3.2.6.10, 3.2.8.7, 3.2.9.3 (SBN 498, 533, 545, 551).

49 See Magri , 241.

50 Less charitably, Hume may be inadvertently conflating two functions of practical reason which share in common methods for correcting for proximity by a distant view or reflection. I thank the editors for prodding me to find the more charitable reading.

51 Again, I am acknowledging at the very least a notional difference between the judgment of value expressing the sentiment of approval and the desire, efficacious or not, to act in accordance with the approval. A case can be made for the claim that, even if, according to Hume, a judgment of prudential value, for example, health is an end of mine, something constituting my good as I see it, were somehow distinct from the corresponding “rational” desire to be healthy, the two would not be merely contingently related.

52 The claim that reason requires impartial conduct is, perhaps, ambiguous. On its face what Hume has in mind is the subjective authority of the agent’s own calm passion to pardon the person who justly opposes one’s interest. Whatever functions as the agent’s reason provides her with authorized motive to pardon. On another reading Hume may have in mind the objective authority of the claim that one ought to conduct oneself impartially and pardon the person who justly opposes ones’ interests irrespective.

Later in the paragraph he speaks of the influence of disinterested “sympathy with those, who have any commerce with the person we consider” on our calm and general principles to explain why such sympathy is “said to have an equal authority over our reason, and to command our judgment and opinion.”

53 Marcia Homiak claims that this deliberative account of moral judgment is discontinuous with the initial sentimentalist account in T 3.1.1–2 and that the function of reason in moral judgment is calculative. It involves the counterfactual assessment of how one would feel as someone in the orbit of the character being judged, were the character unimpeded in its expression. Our moral judgments express hypothetical approvals and disapprovals. A hypothetical approval is not an actual sentiment. Therefore, actual sentiments are dispensable with regard to particular moral judgments. Instead, sentiments take their proper place as shaping character and disposing us to take up the impartial point of view and engage in the activity of moral deliberation. This latter point is important and I agree that the cultivation of character is central in understanding how on Hume’s view we come to engage in moral deliberation. I disagree with her account, however, on three points. (i) On her view the calm passions founded on a distant view are apparently not moral judgments. (ii) It is not obvious to me that the kind of moral imagination exercised in determining how, having abstracted from one’s own interested viewpoint, one would respond to a character, does not involve actual sentiment. But even if the counterfactual conjuring does not by itself involve actual sentiments of approval or disapproval, it does not follow that moral judgments only express hypothetical sentiments. The process of moral deliberation is completed when one’s counterfactual approval/disapproval of a character becomes actual. (iii) I do not think Hume is restricting the scope of judgment in the practical sphere to factual calculation and reflection about counterfactual situations, although I can see how Hume’s appeal to general rules in this regard would encourage such a view.

I do, however, readily concede that on its face what Hume says in the following passage favors her view.

'tis [the sympathy with those, who have any commerce with the person we consider] said to have an equal authority over our reason, and to command our judgment and opinion. We blame equally a bad action, which we read of in history, with one perform'd in our neighbourhood t'other day: The meaning of which is, that we know from reflexion, that the former action wou'd excite as strong sentiments of disapprobation as the latter, were it plac'd in the same position. (T 3.3.1.18; SBN 584)

There are two points of contention; (i) whether reason in this passage is the same as the reason Hume identifies earlier in the paragraph as the calm determination of passions, founded on some distant view or reflexion, and which he further characterizes as able to oppose our passion and as requiring impartial conduct; (ii) whether the meaning claim really commits Hume to the reduction of *x*'s blaming an action to *x*'s counterfactual non-evaluative judgment.

54 The importance of general rules and reflective standpoints is discussed by Walter Brand in *Hume's Theory of Moral Judgment* (Boston: Kluwer, 1992). He does not, however, emphasize, to the extent I do, Hume's endorsement of the methods of generality or his commitment to the authoritative character of what the method produces. Magri, on the other hand, does, although he exploits what he takes to be a central fact about the generality involved in distant-view-based judgments of value in the service of a more radical naturalism than I would ascribe to Hume. His idea is that the abstract description of objects viewed remotely "turns out to be grounded on a cognitive limitation—on a weakness of our imagination. We can appraise objects of choice in terms of their general and more stable qualities just because we cannot represent them as they would appear to us if they were closer. Thus we neglect all the accidental features that would otherwise influence our preferences and could give them an unreasonable bent. In this way, it is as if our preferences were corrected by general rules, that is, by a general description of their particular objects. And this is in its turn the same as appreciating objects in terms of their real value. There is no need to assume a special faculty to account for this fundamental normative capacity" (Magri, 246).

55 And, I should add, just as the general appetite to good, duly informed by consideration of remote goods and custom, corrects for the preference for the contiguous.

56 One could make the case that being the product of impartial reflection and extensive sympathy is what makes the sentiment of approval so produced a moral sentiment.

57 This distinction between sentiments of judgment and recalcitrant passions is repeated at T 3.3.1.23 (SBN 586): "Sentiments much touch the heart, to make them control our passions: But they need not extend beyond the imagination, to make them influence our taste."

58 Consider the comparable passage in section 5 of the second *Enquiry*.

A statesman or patriot, who serves our own country, in our own time, has always a more passionate regard paid to him, than one whose beneficial influence operated on distant ages or remote nations; where the good, resulting from his generous humanity, being less connected with us, seems more obscure, and affects us with a less lively sympathy. We may own the merit to be

equally great, though our sentiments are not raised to an equal height, in both cases. The judgment here corrects the inequalities of our internal emotions and perceptions; in like manner, as it preserves us from error, in the several variations of images, presented to our external senses. The same object, at a double distance, really throws on the eye a picture of but half the bulk; yet we imagine that it appears of the same size in both situations; because we know, that, on our approach to it, its image would expand on the eye, and that the difference consists not in the object itself, but in our position with regard to it. And, indeed, without such a correction of appearances, both in internal and external sentiment, men could never think or talk steadily on any subject; while their fluctuating situations produce a continual variation on objects, and throw them into such different and contrary lights and positions. (EPM 5.41; SBN 227)

59 At T 2.1.6.8 (SBN 293) Hume is explicit about the parallel concerning the influence of general rules on the understanding and on the passions.

60 The case of preferring the contiguous to one's acknowledged interest, as we have seen, raises exactly the analogous questions: does the influence of the contiguous on one's evaluative imagination, as it were, produce a Platonic psychological conflict or an Aristotelian impairment of one's otherwise operative judgments of value?

61 It is in this passage at T 1.3.8. 11 (SBN 149) that Hume refers ahead to T 1.3.15 (SBN 173–9) where he presents rules by which to judge of causes and effects.

62 As previously noted (66), Hume's discussion of allegiance to government distinguishes the natural obligation of interest, which requires such allegiance, and the moral obligation to the same (T 3.2.8.7; SBN 545; T 3.2.9.3; SBN 551) just as the discussion at T 3.2.6.10 (SBN 533) distinguishes self interest and morality as two different foundations of justice. Earlier at T 3.2.2.23 (SBN 498) Hume distinguishes the natural obligation to justice and the moral obligation to the same. He is clearly relying on a Hobbesian understanding of rational self interest as a normative principle. The artificial system of justice and property is in fact the necessary means to commodious living. Therefore, by reason of self-interest, everyone ought to support it. Government is a necessary means for maintaining the artificial system of justice and property. Therefore, everyone has a prudential obligation to submit to the authority of government. Here the obligation is objective and external. Someone who acts to undermine a functioning system of justice, supposing that by so acting he promotes his own good, acts contrary to the principle of self interest. For a more radically naturalistic construal of the natural obligation of interest, see Magri.

63 Here one might yet again raise the question of hedonism. Why isn't the dominant end of keeping one's finger scratch-free blameworthy because it is based on a false supposition of fact, namely, that for the agent in question getting and having a scratch on the finger is more painful than anything else? Rather than repeat what I have already said, let me concede that preferring the annihilation of everything to the scratching of my finger or preferring the death of my benign neighbors to my least inconvenience is of a piece with the sensible knave who prefers cheating and feverish amusements to the pleasure of peaceful reflection on one's own good character and conduct. The question is whether Hume thinks the pleasure the knave pursues and the pleasure he forgoes are

commensurable or are pleasures “which are very different from each other, and which have only such a distant resemblance, as is requisite to make them be express’d by the same abstract term” (T 3.1.2.4; SBN 472). If the pleasures only distantly resemble and do not differ simply in magnitude then it begins to look like the sensible knave and Scratchfree violate their natural obligation of interest by pursuing pleasures that are not as intrinsically enjoyable as those they forgo.

64 See T 2.1.6.4, 2.1.6.9 (SBN 291, 293–4)

65 In the extreme one is subject to loss of recognition. For example, if one violates (c) because the ascription of moral sentiments is denied altogether, then the denomination “human” is withheld (EPM 6.4–5; SBN 235; T 3.1.2.9; SBN 474). This might suggest that the attitude to take toward the characters in Hume’s two cases is therapeutic rather than critical. I have been assuming, however, that the two characters are still within the frame of recognizable human agency.

66 It is difficult to separate judgments about an agent’s operative interest from judgments of an agent’s utility and agreeableness to herself, and thus difficult to separate the evaluation of a character’s operative interest from the moral evaluation of the character.

67 Of course, one can raise puzzles about morally praiseworthy lower level desires that are thwarted by faulty conceptions of one’s interest as when Aristotle muses about the continent man whose appetites are good but whose stronger rational desires informing his state of character are bad (See *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.2, 1146a 13–5).

