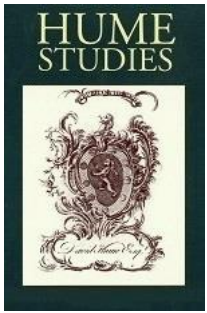

Lauren Kopajtic

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LAUREN KOPAJTIC

Abstract: Several authors have recently noted Hume's relative silence on the virtue of strength of mind and how it is developed. In this paper I suggest that Hume had good reasons for this silence, and I argue that Hume's discussion of artificial virtue, especially the virtue of allegiance, reveals a complex view of the limitations on human efforts at self-reform. Further, it reveals the need for government and externally-imposed regulative structures to enable the development of strength of mind. I argue that because of this, strength of mind awkwardly straddles Hume's distinction between natural and artificial virtue. I conclude that, in comparison with traditional models of self-control, Humean strength of mind is indirect, artificial, and social.

Introduction

In several key places in his philosophical writings, David Hume discusses the virtue of "strength of mind," the ability "to resist the temptation of present ease or pleasure" or to restrain violent passions and prevent them from being the final influence on action (EPM 6.15; SBN 239).[1] In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, this virtue is described as the "prevalence of the calm passions over the violent," and it is related to constancy in conduct and action (T 2.3.3.10; SBN 418).[2] In the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Hume connects strength of mind with the ability

Lauren Kopajtic, Society of Fellows and Department of Philosophy, Columbia University, 2600 Broadway, Heyman Center, East Campus, New York, NY 10027.
E-mail: lauren.kopajtic@gmail.com.

to adhere "to a general and a distant interest, in opposition to the allurements of present pleasure and advantage" (EPM 4.1; SBN 205). And in several places in Hume's writings, strength of mind is linked to happiness and mental tranquility.[3] Given the importance of being able to recognize and adhere to "general and distant interest," and the desirability of being governed by the calm passions instead of the violent, one might expect Hume to offer an extended discussion of strength of mind, describing how it works and how it is cultivated. But in fact, we find no more than a few suggestive remarks and some colorful descriptions of those of us who lack this virtue. This silence might strike us as surprising,[4] especially when we consider Hume in the context of the tradition of philosophical treatments of self-control and the government of the passions.[5] Hume's interest seems to lie in the meticulous study of the principles and phenomena of human nature, while the more practical topics of self-reform and self-improvement are left to other authors and other texts (T 3.3.6.3–6; SBN 619–21).[6]

But perhaps Hume had good reasons for his relative silence on these issues, reasons stemming from his conviction that strength of mind would not admit of cultivation in the way that many of his contemporaries and predecessors had suggested. In this paper, I argue that attention to Hume's discussion of artificial virtue, especially the virtue of allegiance, reveals a complex view of the limitations on human efforts at self-reform. On Hume's view, while a few rare individuals may possess native strength of mind, this virtue cannot be pervasive in societies until externally-imposed regulative and governing structures have been instituted in those societies. That is, in most people and in all societies, strength of mind has sophisticated enabling conditions—external government must be established, governors must be selected, and a system of rules, regulations, and punishments must be in place.

In the first part of this paper, I piece together a picture of strength of mind, drawing from Book 2 of the *Treatise*. I sketch Hume's comments on how we could strengthen the calm passions and bring them to have "motivational prevalence,"[7] thereby achieving strength of mind. In the second part, I consider some significant limitations on our ability to cultivate strength of mind, drawing from Hume's account of the "natural abilities" in *Treatise* 3.3.4, and his account of the artificial virtues in *Treatise* 3.2. Reading Hume's discussion of artificial virtue, especially the virtue of allegiance to government, alongside his claims about strength of mind and calm passion reveals that strength of mind shares certain features with the artificial virtues. I then consider how best to classify strength of mind, and I conclude that strength of mind is an atypical virtue, resisting classification. In the final part, I briefly consider this view of strength of mind in a wider context, arguing that, compared with traditional models of self-control and the government of the passions, Humean strength of mind is strikingly indirect, artificial, and social.

Part One: Strength of Mind

Hume's most explicit treatment of strength of mind occurs in Book 2 of the *Treatise*, following his famous comments about the impotence of reason. Hume begins by describing the common view of self-control and the government of the passions:

> Nothing is more usual in philosophy, and even in common life, than to talk of the combat of passion and reason, to give the preference to reason, and to assert that men are only so far virtuous as they conform themselves to its dictates. Every rational creature, 'tis said, is obliged to regulate his actions by reason; and if any other motive or principle challenge the direction of his conduct, he ought to oppose it, 'till it be entirely subdu'd, or at least brought to a conformity with that superior principle. (T 2.3.3.1; SBN 413)

Hume is describing a consensus view, one that he goes on to undermine by flagrantly claiming that reason *cannot* play the role of governor so often assigned to it. "Reason alone" is inert and "can never produce any action or give rise to volition" (T 2.3.3.4; SBN 414).[8] And since "nothing can oppose or retard the impulse of passion but a contrary impulse," reason alone cannot oppose, control, or otherwise directly interact with the passions (T 2.3.3.4; SBN 415). Hume then famously concludes that "[r]eason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (T 2.3.3.4; SBN 415).

Hume's willingness to demolish the foundation of the traditional conception of self-control could suggest that he, like the Calvinists with whom he was familiar, will completely overhaul the standard position on rational self-control and proclaim that the passions are ungovernable, virtue impossible, and mental tranquility out of our reach. But he does not. On Hume's account, the internal conflict that we so often experience is conflict between various passions, including those that have been often misidentified as reason and its products, namely, the calm passions. The calm passions "produce little emotion in the mind," by which Hume means that we can experience a calm passion without feeling agitated, disturbed, or swept up by it.[9] These passions feel calm and tranquil (T 2.3.3.8; SBN 417). Further, Hume defines "strength of mind" as "the prevalence of the calm passions over the violent," and suggests that achieving this is possible for some people, some of the time, according to their temper (T 2.3.3.10; SBN 418). So, where traditional moralists would entreat us to govern our passions by reason in order to achieve mental tranquility and happiness, Hume claims that this desirable state depends on our achieving strength of mind, or the motivational prevalence of the calm passions (T 2.3.4.10; SBN 419).[10]

For Hume, then, dethroning reason does not leave us with ungoverned and ungovernable passions. But how do we *achieve* this government? How can we cultivate strength of mind, bringing the calm passions to prevail over the violent? Hume's brief remarks focus on the calm passions and the possibility of strengthening them. Since these are complicated issues, I will focus our attention on Hume's conception of passion, the distinction between calm and violent passions, and the mechanisms that contribute to strengthening calm passions.[11]

For Hume, passions are perceptions of the mind—"impressions of reflection," in his terminology.[12] They are sometimes produced by bodily pains and pleasures, sometimes by the perception of objects, and sometimes by a combination of impressions and ideas (T 2.1.1; SBN 275–76). The passions often have objects (as in the case of my fear of the scorpion, for example), but they are not properly said to *represent* their objects.[13] That is, passions may be joined to ideas, which *do* represent objects, but they are not themselves "copies of" anything. Passions also have a phenomenal feel (violent or calm, pleasant or uneasy, and so on), and they can motivate action. Indeed, all motives are properly understood as passions for Hume, for the class of passions includes desires, or "direct passions."[14] The experience of perceiving and fearing a scorpion, for example, is a complex moment, involving impressions of sensation, ideas, impressions of reflection, and impulses to action.

Hume draws several distinctions within the class of passions, including the distinction between calm and violent passion.[15] There is some debate over how best to understand this distinction, but most agree that the important difference between a calm and a violent passion is in the felt quality of each.[16] The calm passions produce little to no agitation (or "emotion") in the mind, which leads them to be mistaken for the operations of reason (T 2.3.3.8; SBN 417). The violent passions, on the other hand, feel disruptive, turbulent, and uneasy. Hume includes in the class of calm passions two kinds of calm desires and tendencies: "either certain instincts originally implanted in our natures, such as benevolence and resentment, the love of life, and kindness to children; or the general appetite to good, and aversion to evil, consider'd merely as such" (T 2.3.3.8; SBN 417). Hume's class of the violent passions includes lust and a desire for revenge "independent of all considerations of pleasure and advantage to myself" (T 2.3.3.9; SBN 418). Hume's examples here suggest that the calm passions are standardly more like dispositions, while the violent are more like occurrent flashes of emotion.

How could a calm passion like "the general appetite to good" ever be capable of countering and prevailing over lust or revenge? Hume distinguishes calm and violent passions from weak and strong passions, and he claims that it is not the case that the calm passions are always *weaker* than the violent:

> 'Tis 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. We must, therefore, distinguish betwixt a calm and a weak passion; betwixt a violent and a strong one. (T 2.3.4.1; SBN 418–19)

The influence of a passion on action is thus a function of its strength, or lack thereof, not of its felt qualities. If a calm passion becomes a "settled principle of action" or "the predominant inclination of the soul," it will exert steady, strong, and calm influence over conduct and action. Hume suggests here that strengthening the calm passions, and thus cultivating strength of mind, involves cultivating such calm, steady influences through custom and habituation (developing "good habits," as we might now say). And a few sections following this remark about the role of custom, Hume adds that reflection and resolution will also play an important role. He writes, "[g]enerally speaking, the violent passions have a more powerful influence on the will; tho' 'tis often found, that the calm ones, when corroborated by reflection, and seconded by resolution, are able to controul them in their most furious movements" (T 2.3.8.13; SBN 438).

Several authors have recently attempted to develop or supplement these remarks, filling in this picture of how custom and reflection work to strengthen the calm passions. Jane McIntyre suggests that the calm passions might gain strength by being shared with many other individuals, and by being communicated through sympathy. A calm passion like "love of life" (T 2.3.3.8; SBN 417) seems to be constant and universal, and so could be strengthened by being shared with a multitude of others.[17] James Harris offers a similar view, focusing on the strengthening effects of sympathy and sociability, and arguing that "the intense sociability of human beings of human beings both enables and necessitates the regulation of the passions."[18] I agree with these authors that these are promising lines to pursue in our search for an account of strengthening the calm passions, but I think that we should first consider some of Hume's more cautious claims about cultivating strength of mind, and about attempts at self-improvement more generally. Indeed, pulling together Hume's claims about the obstacles to cultivating strength of mind will help us to see why social mechanisms and indirect methods work in strengthening the calm passions, and why more individual and direct methods do not. But, as I will argue, gathering these claims will also complicate our understanding of strength of mind, for, as we will see, this virtue does not fit easily into Hume's classificatory scheme.

Part Two: Limitations on Cultivating Strength of Mind

We have gleaned an account of strength of mind from Book 2 of the *Treatise*. Hume claims that although reason cannot govern the passions, calm passions can counter violent passions, and if they regularly prevail over them, we can achieve strength of mind. However, Hume is very aware of the limitations of attempts at strengthening the calm passions, cultivating strength of mind, and generally engaging in self-improvement. Not only does one's degree of strength of mind seem dependent on one's general temperament for Hume, strength of mind also seems to be severely constrained by an ineradicable principle of human nature. In this part, I first consider whether Humean strength of mind is best understood as a "natural ability" and thereby not admitting of any cultivation at all. I then turn to Hume's account of artificial virtue, which offers insight into how Hume conceives of our ability to reform or alter our temperament and passions. Bringing Hume's *Treatise* 3.2 discussion of the origin of government to bear on the question of cultivating strength of mind reveals that Hume thinks that our efforts will be regularly undermined and blocked by our natural tendency to pursue the proximate over the remote, even when the remote is known to be in our greater interest. Hume's argument reveals that, by and large, human beings will not be able to strengthen the calm passions or to achieve strength of mind without the institution of government and the imposition of a large-scale system of rules and regulations. External government enables the government of the passions, and with the establishment of magistrates and sanctions comes the possibility of stable regulation of the passions.

Section 2.1: Temperament and Natural Abilities

In one of the few discussions of strength of mind in the *Treatise*, Hume claims that the motivational prevalence of the calm passions will be determined according to the "*general* character or *present* disposition of the person" (T 2.3.3.10; SBN 418, emphases in original). And a few sections later, he claims that the motivational prevalence of the calm passions will "depend, in a great measure, on the peculiar temper and disposition of every individual" (T 2.3.8.13; SBN 437). This connection between temperament and strength of mind suggests that, for Hume, one's ability to strengthen the calm passions, and to restrain the violent, will be determined by one's temperament, and that strength of mind may be a virtuous quality, more like wit or cheerfulness than justice or honesty.

Although Hume does not explicitly discuss strength of mind in the sections on the "natural abilities" in Book 3 of the *Treatise*, he does refer to a cluster of traits that are associated with strength of mind, arguing that these can be properly understood as virtues, even though they seem to be "invariable by any art or industry" (T 3.3.4.4; SBN 609). Hume lists "industry, perseverance, patience,

activity, vigilance, application, constancy . . . temperance, frugality, œconomy, resolution" as examples of such "invariable" and involuntary traits (T 3.3.4.7; SBN 610–11, emphasis removed).[19] These are all qualities which we judge to be useful to their possessor, and of which we approve, even though they are "involuntary":

> [M]any of those qualities, which all moralists, especially the antients, comprehend under the title of moral virtues, are equally involuntary and necessary, with the qualities of the judgment and imagination. Of this nature are constancy, fortitude, magnanimity; and, in short, all the qualities which form the great man. I might say the same, in some degree, of the others; it being almost impossible for the mind to change its character in any considerable article, or cure itself of a passionate or splenetic temper, when they are natural to it. (T 3.3.4.3; SBN 608)

"Constancy, fortitude, magnanimity," "temperance" and "resolution," and many other qualities are said to be "involuntary and necessary"—the kinds of qualities that are "natural" to a temper and "impossible" to change. It looks as though one either gets dealt a lucky hand, with strength of mind, or at least patience or prudence as one of the cards, or one does not. And bad luck for you if your hand includes "prodigality, luxury, irresolution, uncertainty" (T 3.3.4.7; SBN 611).

If one's strength of mind is determined by one's temperament, and temperament is inalterable, then Hume *should* have very little to say about how strength of mind is cultivated, for it would turn out that it is not cultivable. In this case, either one has native strength of mind or one does not, and no amount of advice, philosophical therapy, or sheer willpower could change that. But this seems too strong, for while it may be the case that I cannot directly and completely change my temperament, Hume certainly does not think that human beings are utterly incapable of growth and development.[20] There must be some methods available to us, some ways of modifying or correcting the temperament we are each given by nature.[21] Indeed, Hume's discussion of the artificial virtues in *Treatise* 3.2 provides three case studies of how a deep-seated and universal passion or principle can be reformed. Attending to Hume's account of these artificial virtues will show us both how Hume is thinking of our ability to restrain and reform our natural passions, and it will also lead us to confront the second limitation on the cultivation of strength of mind.

Section 2.2: Regulatory Virtues—Justice and Fidelity to Promises

Each of Hume's central artificial virtues—justice, fidelity to promises, and allegiance to government—is presented as a remedy to an infirmity in human nature. In each case, an artifice or convention develops through repeated experience

with the effects of a certain passion or principle in human nature, and repeated recognition that one's own interest is not best served by allowing that passion or principle free and full movement. In each case, reformation and regulation of the passion is accomplished through artificial means.[22] I will briefly discuss the first two artificial virtues, justice and fidelity to promises, in order to set up the structure that characterizes each of these sections. Then I will turn to the third artificial virtue, allegiance to government, as it will also help us to understand the nature of strength of mind.

Hume's account of justice and the other artificial virtues has received a great deal of scholarly attention.[23] I will not be able to engage with the many interesting problems, puzzles, and solutions that have been posed, and concern myself here merely with Hume's account of justice, understood as a *regulatory* artificial virtue. After arguing that justice must be an artificial, not a natural virtue,[24] Hume describes the origin of justice. He claims that while human beings are initially brought into social relations through "the natural appetite betwixt the sexes" and the bonds of parental affection, these relations of partiality maintain small social groups only (T 3.2.2.4; SBN 486). With the growth of social groups and the constant problem of our "outward circumstances"—the scarcity of goods and the ease of their transfer—a particular passion grows and becomes a predominant inclination in us. Justice is an artificial "remedy" for this passion, "for what is irregular and incommodious in the affections" (T 3.2.2.9; SBN 489). More specifically, justice offers a remedy for *avidity*, the self-interested desire for "acquiring goods and possessions," which is, according to Hume, "insatiable, perpetual, universal, and directly destructive of society" (T 3.2.2.12; SBN 492).

How does justice manage to remedy this violent passion? Hume argues that human beings gradually develop a convention, the convention of "bestow[ing] stability on the possession of those external goods, and leav[ing] every one in the peaceable enjoyment of what he may acquire by his fortune and industry" (T 3.2.2.9; SBN 489). By this convention "the passions are restrain'd in their partial and contradictory motions," and human beings are "induce[d]" "to regulate their conduct by certain rules" (T 3.2.2.9–10; SBN 489–90). Hume explains that the regulatory function of justice works by working *with* the problematic passion: "Nor is such a restraint contrary to these passions; for if so, it cou'd never be enter'd into, nor maintain'd; but it is only contrary to their heedless and impetuous movement" (T 3.2.2.9; SBN 489). The convention restrains the "heedless and impetuous movement" of avidity, it does not eradicate that passion itself, nor attempt to entirely stifle it. And this restraint is accomplished because "'tis evident that the passion is much better satisfied by its restraint, than by its liberty" (T 3.2.2.13; SBN 492). Once human beings recognize that they can best satisfy their "insatiable, perpetual, universal" desire to acquire goods and possessions by establishing property conventions, the "natural movements" of avidity are reformed, changing

from something like a scattershot desire attaching to all goods to a focused desire attaching to the goods one possesses and those one may possess through just means. Hume claims that avidity is "regulat[ed] and "restrain[ed]," through "an alteration of its direction" (T 3.2.2.12–13; SBN 492). The "first and most natural movements" (T 3.2.2.12; SBN 492) of this passion are redirected so that the passion itself becomes more functional and effective.

The structure of Hume's account of justice as a regulatory virtue is repeated in his description of the second artificial virtue, fidelity to promises. This artificial virtue develops alongside the development of justice, for when the system of property rules grows complex enough to require long-term planning and group cooperation, a new tendency of human nature rears its head. Hume portrays this development as follows:

> Your corn is ripe to-day; mine will be so to-morrow. 'Tis profitable for us both, that I shou'd labour with you to-day, and that you shou'd aid me to-morrow. I have no kindness for you, and know you have as little for me. I will not, therefore, take any pains upon your account; and shou'd I labour with you upon my own account, in expectation of a return, I know I shou'd be disappointed, and that I shou'd in vain depend upon your gratitude. Here then I leave you to labour alone: You treat me in the same manner. The seasons change; and both of us lose our harvests for want of mutual confidence and security. (T 3.2.5.8; SBN 520–21)

These unfortunate neighbors are not joined by bonds of affection or partiality ("I have no kindness for you, and know you have as little for me"), and, when faced with the need to cooperate in order to achieve their mutual interest, they are checked by "want of mutual confidence and security." They are driven by the suspicion and mistrust that attends relations with strangers and end up acting against their own interest. But repeated experience with this "want of mutual confidence and security," especially as contrasted with "the more generous and noble intercourse of friendship and good offices," gives rise to a symbolic phrase—"I hereby promise to . . ."—which marks the difference between promises between disinterested parties and those between interested parties (T 3.2.5.10; SBN 522). An artificial phrase now serves as a sign, as something that when used shows that the user "is immediately bound by his interest to execute his engagements, and must never expect to be trusted any more, if he refuses to perform what he promis'd" (T 3.2.5.10; SBN 522). As Mark Collier puts it, these agents "stake their reputations on these exchanges," and agree to make good on their word, on pain of forfeiting future opportunities to enter into agreements.[25]

How does this artificial sign check the natural tendency—suspicion and mistrust towards strangers—that caused the problem in the first place? Hume

again argues that the problematic natural tendency is *redirected* by means of the convention:

> All this is the effect of the natural and inherent principles and passions of human nature; and as these passions and principles are inalterable, it may be thought, that our conduct, which depends on them, must be so too, and that it would be in vain, either for moralists or politicians, to tamper with us, or attempt to change the usual course of our actions, with a view to public interest. And indeed, did the success of their designs depend upon their success in correcting the selfishness and ingratitude of men, they would never make any progress, unless aided by omnipotence, which is alone able to new-mould the human mind, and change its character in such fundamental articles. All they can pretend to, is, to give *a new direction* to those natural passions, and teach us that we can better satisfy our appetites in an *oblique and artificial manner*, than by their headlong and impetuous motion. (T 3.2.5.9; SBN 521, emphasis added)[26]

Again we see Hume arguing that a natural principle of human nature, "inalterable" in the sense that it cannot be wholly rooted out or suppressed, may nonetheless be given a "new direction." In this case, human beings learn through experience that the "headlong and impetuous motion"[27] of certain principles and passions may be checked and that we may better pursue our own interest by satisfying those passions "in an oblique and artificial manner." These artificial virtues do not work by extirpating or replacing passions, but by redirecting them—by harnessing the deeply rooted power of these universal, constant, and original passions and directing that power along a more efficient path towards its end.

Hume describes justice and fidelity to promises as artificial virtues, which each regulate a natural propensity of human nature that would be destructive if left in its natural state. Justice regulates our natural avidity through artificial property conventions, and fidelity regulates our natural suspicion and mistrust of strangers through an artificial sign of trust. I will now turn to the third artificial virtue, allegiance to government, and argue that Hume's account of this virtue reveals a much more general infirmity in our nature, indeed, an infirmity which characterizes the previous two cases as well. I will then show that Hume's solution complicates our understanding of Humean strength of mind.

Section 2.3: Regulatory Virtues—Allegiance to Government[28]

Hume begins his discussion of the origin of government by claiming that "men are, in great measure, *govern'd* by interest" (T 3.2.7.1; SBN 534, emphasis added). At this point in the *Treatise*, Hume has argued that justice and fidelity to promises

are clearly in everyone's interest, so he now has to deal with a difficult problem—how could disorder ever arise in a society if order is so clearly in our interest, and self-interest is such a strong motive? The explanation he finds hinges on the claim that we are "govern'd" by interest, for it turns out that this government is neither stable nor reliable because of a deep and worrisome propensity of human nature:

> Now as every thing, that is contiguous to us, either in space or time, strikes upon us with such an idea, it has a proportional effect on the will and passions, and commonly operates with more force than any object that lies in a more distant and obscure light. 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; but yield to the sollicitations of our passions, which always plead in favour of whatever is near and contiguous. (T 3.2.7.2; SBN 535)[29]

I will refer to this principle of human nature as the *proximity principle*.[30] The proximity principle determines us to pursue the proximate over the remote, despite our resolutions, and even when we are aware that the remote is in our greater interest. This principle does not necessarily interfere with or corrupt our judgment about the value of the near object in comparison with the remote, rather, it interferes with our motivation to pursue the greater object by increasing the influence of the passion that "pleads in favour of" the near object.

If we compare the proximity principle with the two other problematic passions that are regulated by an artificial virtue, we can notice first that the proximity principle is much more general than avidity or "want of mutual confidence and security." The proximity principle is a basic and general motivational tendency to pursue the proximate over the remote, unlike the specific desire for goods that justice remedies, or the specific aversion to trusting strangers, which fidelity remedies. Indeed, the proximity principle seems to operate by qualifying other desires and tendencies, increasing the influence of desires for proximate items, and decreasing the influence of desires for remote items. Further, the proximity principle seems to make trouble for the two previous remedies—in each of the previous cases, the members of the society come to recognize that they can better satisfy their desires and pursue their interest by regulating their conduct by a convention. Both previous remedies depend on the individuals' recognition that their greater interest is best served through the institution of a convention and the subsequent redirection of the passion. But what happens when the opportunity to filch from a neighbor or to break a contract presents itself as an attractive—and *proximate*—option? Hume's discussion of the origin of government begins at the limits of the two previous solutions; without the backing of a government and its magistrates, justice and fidelity to promises will not long regulate conduct. Disorder enters society, and a new remedy must be sought.

Let us look more closely at how the proximity principle causes disorder. Hume has claimed that human beings are strongly and "sincerely" attached to their own interest, and that the observation of justice is clearly in their interest, and so he asks: "[how can any disorder] ever arise in society, and what principle is there 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).[31] We have already seen Hume's answer: the proximity principle is *strong* enough to counter and overcome our strong motivation to pursue our interest, and it is *violent* enough to obscure our knowledge of what is in our interest. The proximity principle will thus consistently undermine prudential action, and once it gets a foothold in a society, it will undermine justice as well. This is because each member of society recognizes that everyone around her is affected as she is by the proximity principle:

> You have the same propension, that I have, in favour of what is contiguous above what is remote. You are, therefore, naturally carried to commit acts of injustice as well as me. Your example both pushes me forward in this way by imitation, and also affords me a new reason for any breach of equity, by shewing me, that I should be the cully of my integrity, if I alone shou'd impose on myself a severe restraint amidst the licentiousness of others. (T 3.2.7.3; SBN 535)

Once people start to be affected by this principle, their example has a cascading effect, loosening the bonds of the conventions of justice and promising and encouraging further infractions.

What can we do in this situation? We cannot remove this troublesome principle from our nature—Hume is adamant about this: "Men are not able radically to cure, either in themselves or others, that narrowness of soul, which makes them prefer the present to the remote. They cannot change their natures" (T 3.2.7.6; SBN 537).[32] Further, the various methods for strengthening the calm passions and countering the violent passions, which we tried to glean from Hume's Book 2 account, are explicitly described as ineffectual: "I may have recourse to study and reflexion within myself; to the advice of friends; to frequent meditation, and repeated resolution: And having experienced how ineffectual all these are, I may embrace with pleasure any other expedient, by which I may impose a restraint upon myself, and guard against this weakness" (T 3.2.7.5; SBN 536–37). Perhaps habit, reflection, and resolution work sometimes, for some passions and for some people, but in the case of the proximity principle, they are not reliably effective, and they do not solve the widespread problems created by this principle.

On Hume's account, the very principle that hampers our attempts to act prudently and justly also explains the origin of government. After experiencing the workings of the proximity principle, I recognize that I have a "natural infirmity"

and I "endeavor, by all possible means, to free my self from it" (T 3.2.7.5; SBN 536). But I cannot just *resolve* to uphold the rules of justice, for such a resolution is exactly what is doomed by the proximity principle to fail—I need to find some way of circumventing or exploiting the workings of the problematic principle. Hume argues that the only solution is to select a group of people to be governors, to make the observance of justice their constant, proximate interest, and to agree to be constrained by them:

> [I]t is impossible to change or correct any thing material in our nature, the utmost we can do is to *change our circumstances and situation*, and render the observance of the laws of justice our nearest interest, and their violation our most remote. But this being impracticable with respect to all mankind, it can only take place with respect to a few, *whom we thus immediately interest in the execution of justice*. These are the persons, whom we call civil magistrates, kings and their ministers, *our governors and rulers*. . . . These persons, then, are not only induced to observe those rules in their own conduct, but also *to constrain others* to a like regularity, and inforce the dictates of equity through the whole society. (T 3.2.7.6; SBN 537, emphases added)[33]

We cannot change our natures, so we change our situations. An artificial hierarchy is created—a few of us becoming governors, while most of us become subjects—and an enforceable system of rules and punishments is established. For the new magistrates, the enforcement of justice becomes their nearest and strongest interest, and for the subjects, an aversion to punishment and contempt.[34]

If we compare this remedy to the other two proposed remedies, a few things become clear. First, as mentioned above, this remedy is offered for a much more general propensity of human nature, a propensity which affects almost all of us most of the time. Second, in this case, Hume does not describe the regulation of the principle as a redirection or a restraint of its "headlong" (or "heedless") and "impetuous" motion.[35] Instead, this remedy works by effecting a large-scale *rearrangement* of persons in relation to other persons and in relation to their various interests. We *all* "change our circumstances and situation": magistrates are put into a new relation of proximity to the interested motive to uphold justice, and they are put into a very new relation of authority over the newly-created subjects. Subjects are put into a new relation to fear of punishment and contempt, as these passions were presumably present before, but now are made stronger because of the belief that there is someone with the authority and capacity to enforce the rules of justice. Like the two previous remedies, this is an "oblique and artificial" solution to a problem, an attempt to indirectly remedy what cannot be directly manipulated. But this remedy involves a more radical and complex structural change: the

creation of hierarchical relations, a system of constraints and punishments, and a large-scale, external regulatory structure. It is only by such drastic means, Hume claims, that humans "acquire a security against each other's weakness and passion, as well as against their own, and under the shelter of their governors, begin to taste at ease the sweets of society and mutual assistance" (T 3.2.7.8; SBN 538).

For Hume, the proximity principle is the most dangerous and most pressing infirmity of human nature: "there is no quality in human nature, which causes more fatal errors in our conduct" (T 3.2.7.8; SBN 539). This principle is basic enough to interfere with all of our well-laid plans, from the self-interested to the public-spirited, and it is deep enough to resist most attempts to remedy it. It undermines the efforts made to establish justice and fidelity, and it blocks all our attempts to improve our situation. The proximity principle is so dangerous and so pervasive that humans agree to "lay themselves under the necessity of observing the laws of justice and equity"—we agree to be governed by others because we recognize that we cannot each govern ourselves (T 3.2.7.6; SBN 537).

Section 2.4: Strength of Mind as an Atypical Virtue

Hume's artificial virtues play crucial regulatory roles—they each involve a convention that helps to redirect or rearrange human passions and principles. Our discussion of allegiance to government and the attempt to find a remedy for the proximity principle brings us back to the questions about the nature of strength of mind and the possibility of cultivating it. Is strength of mind an artificial or a natural virtue? Is it a natural ability or a general temperament? In this section I show that, on Hume's view, while some rare individuals will be able to develop their native capacity for strength of mind without much external intervention, this virtue cannot be pervasive in societies until regulative and governing structures have been instituted. Thus, strength of mind sits uneasily in Hume's classificatory system, sharing features with the natural virtues and with the artificial virtues, and resisting categorization.[36]

In recent papers, Jane McIntyre and Elizabeth Radcliffe each notice that strength of mind seems to share features with both the artificial and the natural virtues.[37] Between them, McIntyre and Radcliffe focus on three features Hume uses to distinguish the virtues: (1) whether or not what we approve of when we approve of the virtuous quality or trait is a natural motive, a motive that has "no dependence on the artifice and contrivance of men" (T 3.3.1.1; SBN 574); (2) whether good is produced on every individual exercise of the virtuous quality, or whether good is produced rather by its being part of a "whole plan or scheme" that is "highly conducive, or absolutely requisite," to the good of society and its members (T 3.2.2.22; SBN 497); and (3) whether or not the approvable motive depends on a specific convention. *Artificial virtues* are those that (1) have no natural

motive; (2) produce good by being part of a larger scheme; and (3) are enabled by a specific convention. *Natural virtues* are the converse; they (1) have natural motives; (2) produce good on every instance; and (3) are not dependent on a specific convention. This scheme looks neat enough—the problem is that strength of mind is not easily sorted based on these features.

McIntyre focuses on the second and third features, arguing that, based on the second feature, strength of mind falls on the side of artificial virtue, for, "like the artificial virtues, its exercise is approved as part of a plan or scheme that satisfies a longer term interest" ("Strength of Mind," 398). But since strength of mind, on her view, is not supported by a "specific convention," but rather by "a variety of social artifices," it does not have full status as an artificial virtue ("Strength of Mind," 398).[38] McIntyre concludes from this evidence that strength of mind is "best understood as a *quasi-artificial virtue*" ("Strength of Mind," 398, emphasis in original). Radcliffe focuses on the first and second features. She disputes McIntyre's claim that strength of mind shares the second feature with the artificial virtues, noting that even if strength of mind does require the "postponement of gratification," it does so in service of a longer-term personal good, and not in service of a larger-scale or public good (Radcliffe, "Strength of Mind," 565). Furthermore, Radcliffe argues that strength of mind shares the first feature with the natural virtues, arguing that there are "numerous" natural motives for strength of mind.[39] Radcliffe concludes that "strength of mind is clearly a natural virtue for Hume" ("Strength of Mind," 565).

McIntyre and Radcliffe each focus on different features of strength of mind, and these different features point to different cases to be made for classifying this virtue. While I am sympathetic to the points that each author makes, I am less confident that we can settle the question of how to classify this virtue. In the rest of this section, I will describe yet another complicating feature of strength of mind, namely, that its enabling conditions are artificial and complex. The key to seeing this point is to reflect on the fact that Hume discusses the artificial virtues *before* the natural virtues. This detail about the order of presentation may seem minor, but it has been the subject of regular speculation. Ken O'Day writes that it is "perplexing" that "Hume begins with the artificial virtues and devotes over twice the space to discussing them" ("Hume's Distinction," 122). And Annette Baier devotes several pages of her *Progress of Sentiments* to explaining why Hume has good reasons for this choice (chap. 8). I too think that Hume had good reasons for this choice, namely, that he thought that given certain features of human psychology and certain conditions of human society, and especially given the pervasive and dangerous effects of the proximity principle in large-scale societies, the institution of government is a necessary enabling condition for the development of strength of mind amongst the members of societies.[40]

In order to see the importance of the order of presentation more clearly, let us return to Hume's account of artificial virtue. For Hume, humans in pre-civil society are driven by sympathy and motivated by benevolence and many other natural virtues.[41] They are kind and affectionate to their family members, generous with their friends, and diligent in acting to improve their condition. And with the development of the first two artificial virtues, which Hume believes will happen quickly (T 3.2.2.14; SBN 493), such a society can persist for some time. Hume writes, "tho' government be an invention very advantageous, and even in some circumstances absolutely necessary to mankind; it is not necessary in all circumstances, nor is it impossible for men to preserve society for some time, without having recourse to such an invention" (T 3.2.8.1; SBN 539). But once such a society grows large enough, or once several small societies proliferate in the same area, the conflict and disorder described in *Treatise* 3.2.7 arises and individuals come to feel the dangerous influence of the proximity principle. Their attempts to be prudent or just regularly fail, they are governed by violent and strong desires for the proximate, and their examples have a cascading effect, encouraging others to imitate their behavior and thereby spreading the problem. It is in this desperate state that humans search for "any other expedient, by which [they] may impose a restraint upon [themselves], and guard against this weakness" (T 3.2.7.5; SBN 537–38). What they find is the artificial institution of government, which provides the "security" and "shelter" under which human civilization can grow and develop (T 3.2.7.8; SBN 538).

Hume's account of the origin of government is also an account of the enabling conditions for strength of mind. It is possible that a few members of the pre-civil society are of a naturally "strong and determined temper" (EPM 6.15; SBN 239) and resistant to the effects of the proximity principle that plague the rest of us. But the crisis that leads to the origin of government is caused by the *widespread* and *regular* failure of individuals to be governed by their calm desire for their own greater interest. Instead, they are governed by violent desires for the proximate, and they are bereft of any resources to change their situation (T 3.2.7.5; SBN 536).[42] External government originates from the recognition that strength of mind is beyond the reach of most of us most of the time.

With the institution of government, we agree to have a regulatory structure imposed on us, and this structure checks the proximity principle in one key area of its possible harm, that pertaining to justice. Members of the newly-created government grow *accustomed* to restraining the passions and motives that call them to break their promises and to infringe upon the rules of justice.[43] They also begin to sympathize with the public interest, thereby leading to the "progress of sentiments," by which a moral sentiment comes to be attached to justice and the other artificial virtues (T 3.2.2.24–25; SBN 499–500). Politicians encourage this progress, employing evaluative terms and offering public praise for the just and

the obedient, and blame for the unjust and the disobedient (T 3.2.2.25; SBN 500). Private education also steps in, further reinforcing the association of justice with moral praise and honor, and teaching children "to regard the observance of those rules, by which society is maintain'd, as worthy and honourable, and their violation as base and infamous" (T 3.2.2.26; SBN 501). Finally, the opinion that merit and demerit attend justice and injustice proliferates, and our interest in our own good reputation reinforces the motive to be just (T 3.2.2.27; SBN 501).

This little story about the "progress of sentiments," which comes as a preview of Hume's account of moral sentiment in *Treatise* 3.3, also offers an account of how external, artificial regulations may come to be habitual and regular influences on action.[44] That is, this story offers an account of how individuals may internalize external regulations, enabling them to develop strength of mind. Recall Hume's description in Book 2 of how a calm passion comes to be strong: "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). Prior to the establishment of government, even the strong, calm desire for one's own greater interest was not sufficiently strong to outweigh the proximity principle (T 3.2.7.1–3; SBN 534–35). But following the establishment of government, individuals become accustomed to restraining their desires for proximate objects that would lead them to commit unjust acts.[45] At first, this is likely because of fear of the consequences of injustice, but as sentiments progress, sympathy with the public interest, love of honour and the desire to be thought well of by others also contribute to the strengthening of the desires to be just, faithful, honest, and loyal—all of which are artificial virtues on Hume's account. And in this way, strength of mind is developed and people begin to regulate their behavior in a variety of important but mundane ways.[46] Members of Hume's early governed society are learning a pattern of restraint and regulation, a pattern that can be applied by the diligent and the insightful to other, more private areas of their lives.[47] Indeed, learning this pattern is crucial to the development of strength of mind, for the institution of government only exploits the proximity principle in cases of justice and public interest. Governors do not (for better or worse) constrain us to get regular exercise, to control our anger and frustration with a lackadaisical colleague, or to treat our loved ones with patience and kindness. Strength of mind in these more private realms must still be developed, and this will proceed as humans learn to apply the pattern of regulation to other passions and principles.

Strength of mind is the quality of mind characterizing someone in whom the calm passions regularly influence action. Like the natural abilities, "industry, perseverance, patience, activity, vigilance, application, constancy," strength of mind seems at least partly dependent on one's given temperament (T 3.3.4.7; SBN 610). Like the natural virtues, the motive for strength of mind is natural, and

the exercise of strength of mind is useful and often immediately approvable. And like the artificial virtues, strength of mind requires the establishment of specific conventions for its development. Humean strength of mind is not non-existent without the institution of government, but without government, a very large proportion of human beings will be incapable of regulating the proximity principle and developing strength of mind. With the institution of government and the imposition of a regulatory structure, humans grow accustomed to regulating their conduct, thereby strengthening their calm passions and developing strength of mind. Thus, strength of mind is an atypical virtue, falling between, or perhaps straddling, Hume's distinction between the natural and artificial virtues.

Part Three: Humean Strength of Mind in Context

Hume has not offered a canonical account of self-control—his account is not one of the autonomous individual flexing her willpower muscle,[48] or retreating to a darkened room in order to eliminate errors in her judgment and desires.[49] It is not an account of a weak human praying for the grace of God to help her defeat her passions,[50] nor is it an account of the reflective person employing philosophical argumentation as a sort of therapy for desire.[51] Considered alongside traditional conceptions of the government of the passions and self-control, Humean strength of mind is strikingly *indirect*, *artificial* and *social*.[52]

In each of the three cases of artificial virtue, we saw that the regulation of passions involves an "oblique and artificial" remedy. The need for these indirect remedies is a function of Hume's general conception of human psychology. Hume describes individuals as if they are bundles of forces, themselves embedded in a network of forces. I am the site of myriad interactions between more or less forceful passions, each with a direction or object, a degree of strength, and a qualitative feel. The interactions between my passions are determined by a long list of "steady principles," principles like the proximity principle.[53] And these principles are largely sub-agential, operating without my awareness and often beyond the reach of any intentional control. Hume writes,

> What makes [the influence of passions on the will] more uncertain, is, that a calm passion may easily be changed into a violent one, either by a change of temper, or of the circumstances and situation of the object, as by the borrowing of force from any attendant passion, by custom, or by exciting the imagination. Upon the whole, this struggle of passion and of reason, as it is call'd, diversifies human life, and makes men so different not only from each other, but also from themselves in different times. Philosophy can only account for a few of the greater and more sensible events of this war; but must leave all the smaller and more delicate revolutions,

> as dependent on principles too fine and minute for her comprehension. (T 2.3.8.13; SBN 438)

The passions and principles of human nature are complicated, intricate, and difficult to observe, even for the diligent scientist of human nature. Many of the movements of our thoughts and feelings depend on "principles too fine and minute for [philosophy's] comprehension." These minute principles are also the cause of the great diversity and apparent inconstancy we see in human action.

Hume's picture grows even more complicated if we zoom out to the level of groups and societies. Not only are individuals described as buzzing bundles of passions, sympathy works to connect individuals, allowing passions to reach across persons, and artificial institutions like government insert checks and constraints into the system. As we saw above, the "progress of sentiments" is moved along by the influence of politicians and educators, and by the basic human concern for reputation, and our passions are affected by each of these influences. At this level of complexity, we could interpret Hume's account of the government of the passions as an account of the *homeostasis* of the passions of groups of people. Or, to use an analogy suggested by Hume himself, as a meteorological model of human passion.[54] On such a view, *I* do not govern my passions, my passions are regulated and modified through interactions with other passions in the system, and in accordance with general principles that are largely beyond my awareness and understanding.[55]

In this way, we can speak of the "self-regulation" of the passions, as James Harris has recently argued: "Hume presented the realm of passions as structured in such a way as to make permissible talk of the *self-regulation* of the passions—though with the proviso that it be understood that the self-regulation in question operates in the context of the social realm taken as a whole, rather than within the breasts of individual men and women" ("Compleat Chain of Reasoning," 132). But Harris also claims, just after this description of Hume's view, that Hume sees the passions as capable of self-regulation "without superintendence by political authority" ("Compleat Chain of Reasoning," 133). Harris makes this claim in the context of a comparison of Hume to Thomas Hobbes, and Hume may indeed have a less severe view than Hobbes of how political authority is requisite for the government of the passions. But, as I have argued above, political authority is an important part of Hume's story, and the "self-regulation" of the passions requires the institution of government before sympathy can do its work to aid that regulation. Without the establishment of government, strength of mind and the government of the passions cannot gain a stable foothold in society.

If my interpretation is correct, we can see why Hume may have avoided giving advice on strengthening the calm passions and cultivating strength of mind. We can also see why Hume's pre-civil human beings, when faced with the problems

caused by the proximity principle, must "change [their] circumstances and situation," and not seek futilely to "change or correct any thing material in [their] nature" (T 3.2.7.6; SBN 537). If we and our passions are embedded in a massive system of interacting passions and principles, and if we can only gain insight into a few of the major forces at play, and if many of those forces will prove to be ineradicable propensities of human nature, why should we think we can directly tinker with the system? Better for us to try indirect methods—to use Hume's example, if I find myself gripped with "philosophical melancholy," I would be well-advised to leave the confines of my room and "[to] dine, [to] play a game of backgammon, [to] converse, and [to be] merry with my friends" (T 1.4.7.9; SBN 269).[56]

This is a strikingly different account of the government of the passions and strength of mind.[57] Instead of an emphasis on the willful and solitary efforts of the individual, marked by the presence of "self" in the terms preferred by other authors ("self-control," "self-command," "self-rule," and so on), we find an emphasis on the complexity and opacity of human psychology.[58] Instead of finding a connection between self-control and autonomy, we find that the development of strength of mind for the vast majority of human beings requires the artificial establishment of institutions of government. And instead of conceiving of strength of mind and self-control as individual affairs only, we find that strength of mind requires society—human beings learn to regulate their desires and passions by first internalizing the regulations imposed by external government, and then through the influence of politics, education, and other social interactions.

NOTES

1 References to Hume's works follow the practice of the Hume Society, using the numbering system of the Clarendon editions, along with the Selby-Bigge/Nidditch pages. In this case, I am citing Hume's *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, section 6, paragraph 15, at page 239 in the Selby-Bigge/Nidditch edition. I will follow a similar practice when citing Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* and *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (using Book, part, section, and paragraph number for the *Treatise*, and section and paragraph number for the *Enquiry*). When citing Hume's essays, I use the Liberty Fund edition *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary* (EMPL), referring to shortened essay title and page number. I use the abbreviations "T" for *Treatise*, "EHU" for the first *Enquiry*, and "EPM" for the second *Enquiry*.

2 See also T 2.3.3–4; 3.3.1.24; 3.3.4.7 (SBN 418–19, 587, 610–11).

3 See "The Skeptic": "Some men are possessed of great strength of mind; and even when they pursue external objects, are not much affected by a disappointment, but renew their application and industry with the greatest chearfulness. Nothing contributes more to happiness than such a turn of mind" (168). See also T 2.3.3.8; 2.3.8.13 (SBN 417, 437); EPM 6.15; 9.12 (SBN 239; 277).

4 Several recent commentators have remarked on this silence; see, for example, Paxman, "Imperceptible Impressions"; Radcliffe, "Strength of Mind"; Tolonen, *Mandeville and Hume*, especially 1–17; Harris, *Hume*; Harris, "Compleat Chain of Reasoning"; Gill, *British Moralists*, especially 201–203; McIntyre, "Hume's 'New and Extraordinary' Account of the Passions"; McIntyre, "Strength of Mind"; McIntyre, "Hume's Passions." Others have argued that Hume has more to say about strength of mind and its cultivation than is often noticed; see, for example, McCullough, "Constancy and the Calm Passions"; Abramson, "Two Portraits."

5 See Harris, "Government of the Passions" and McIntyre, "Hume's 'New and Extraordinary' Account of the Passions" for an overview of this tradition.

6 While it is clear that Hume self-consciously refused to engage in "painting" and more practical philosophy in the *Treatise* (see T 3.3.6.6; SBN 620–21), it is less clear whether he took himself to be engaging in the easier and more attractive sort of philosophy in the second *Enquiry*. See, for example, Abramson, "Hume's Distinction"; Abramson, "Happy to Unite, or Not?"; Immerwahr, "The Anatomist and the Painter."

7 I borrow this phrase from Radcliffe, "Strength of Mind," 547.

8 For further discussion of Hume's conception of reason, see *inter alia*, Cohon, *Hume's Morality*; Garrett, "Hume's Conclusions"; Owen, *Hume's Reason*; Radcliffe, "Hume on the Generation of Motives," 119–20n9; Baier, *Progress of Sentiments*.

9 "Emotion" is a semi-technical term for Hume, often referring to a *motion* of the "spirits" or of the imagination as it runs from one passion, impression, or idea, to another, along the rails of association and relation. Hume's terms "passion" and "sentiment" correspond more readily to our term, "emotion." See Paxman, "Imperceptible Impressions" and Radcliffe, "Strength of Mind," for two recent accounts of how best to understand this distinction between calm and violent passion.

10 See also endnote 3 for Hume's connection, in various places, between strength of mind and mental tranquility.

11 These issues have also received much attention in the literature; in addition to the references cited in the remainder of this section, also see those cited in endnote 4.

12 For helpful general discussions of Hume's account of the passions, see Schmitter "Hume on the Emotions"; Buckle, "Hume on the Passions"; Alanen, "Powers and Mechanisms of the Passions."

13 This is a complicated issue that I cannot do justice to here. For further discussion, see, *inter alia*, Garrett, "Hume's Naturalistic Theory of Representation"; Cohon and Owen, "Representation, Reason, and Motivation"; Sayre-McCord, "Hume's Representation Argument."

14 But not all passions are motives—pride and humility are explicitly discussed by Hume as not producing any impulse to action; see T 2.2.6.3 (SBN 367). Hume's distinction between direct and indirect passions is an important part of his anatomy of the passions, but since it does not play an important role in his discussion of strength of mind, I do not discuss it here. See McIntyre, "Hume's Passions," for a discussion of the indirect and direct passions which briefly connects these to the question of strength of mind and its cultivation.

15 Several commentators have observed that Hume seems to be following Francis Hutcheson in this distinction. See, for example, McIntyre "Hume's 'New and Extraordinary' Account" and "Hume's Passions"; Immerwahr, "Hume on Tranquillizing the Passions." There is a large body of literature on Hume's taxonomy of the passions, and I cannot engage with that literature here. See Fieser, "Hume's Classification of the Passions and its Precursors," for an overview of this discussion.

16 See Paxman, "Imperceptible Impressions"; Buckle, "Hume on the Passions"; Harris, "Compleat Chain of Reasoning"; McIntyre, "Strength of Mind"; Immerwahr, "Hume on Tranquillizing the Passions."

17 McIntyre, "Strength of Mind," referring to EPM 9.9 (SBN 275) and T 2.1.11.19 (SBN 324). See also McCullough, "Constancy and the Calm Passions."

18 Harris, "Compleat Chain of Reasoning," 137; I return to Harris's view, which is close to my own, in part three.

19 In the parallel discussion of "qualities useful to ourselves" in EPM, "strength of mind" is mentioned along with discretion, industry, frugality, and other similar qualities (EPM 6.8–15; SBN 236–40).

20 See Abramson, "What's So 'Natural' about Hume's Natural Virtues?" for an extended discussion of the question of the inalterability of the natural virtues and abilities.

21 Although I cannot discuss them here, Hume's four essays on happiness ("The Epicurean," "The Stoic," "The Platonist," and "The Skeptic") treat this theme as well. I choose not to discuss these essays here as there are tricky interpretive questions to be decided about whether we see Hume's own views anywhere in these essays. My own view is that Hume's position can be found in "The Skeptic," with the tempering provided by the important footnote at the end. Hume's view would thus be that we cannot radically change our natures, but education, habituation, and persuasion can contribute to regulation and reformation of certain qualities and propensities. What will *not* help is philosophical argumentation, which is, according to the Skeptic and the author of the footnote, of little use in the moment of action.

22 Cohon and Gill have each argued that Hume's sketch of the development of the artificial virtues involves a description of a psychological transformation; see Cohon, *Hume's Morality*, chap. 6; Gill, *British Moralists*, chap. 18; Gill, "Hume's Progressive View of Human Nature"; Cohon, "Hume's Difficulty with the Virtue of Honesty."

23 There are far too many excellent discussions of Hume on justice and the artificial virtues to cite comprehensively. For a recent introduction to and overview of Hume on justice, see Magri, "Hume's Justice." For other important treatments of justice and artificial virtue see, *inter alia*, Tolonen, *Mandeville and Hume*; Baier, *Cautious Jealous Virtue*; Harris, "Hume on the Moral Obligation to Justice"; Cohon, *Hume's Morality*; Garrett, "The First Motive to Justice"; Gauthier, "Artificial Virtue and the Sensible Knave"; Baron, "Hume's Noble Lie"; Haakonssen, *The Science of a Legislator*; Mackie, *Hume's Moral Theory*.

24 I discuss this distinction in section 2.4.

25 Collier, "Hume's Natural History of Justice," 135.

26 See also, "[b]ut 'tis certain we can naturally no more change our own sentiments, than the motions of the heavens" (T 3.2.5.4; SBN 517); and "[m]en are not able radically to cure, either in themselves or others, that narrowness of soul, which makes them prefer the present to the remote. They cannot change their natures. All they can do is to change their situation" (T 3.2.7.6; SBN 537).

27 Cf. Hume's language about the "heedless and impetuous" movement of avidity (T 3.2.2.9; SBN 489).

28 I have found Cohon, "Shackles of Virtue," and Collier, "Hume's Natural History of Justice," very helpful in working out my view on these sections.

29 Cf. "Talk to a man of his condition thirty years hence, and he will not regard you. Speak of what is to happen to-morrow, and he will lend you attention. The breaking of a mirror gives us more concern when at home, than the burning of a house, when abroad, and some hundred leagues distant" (T 2.3.7.3; SBN 428–29).

30 We might also call it the "contiguity principle," as Hume is clearly referencing his discussion in *Treatise* Book 2, especially the sections "*Of contiguity and distance in space and time*," which treat the effects of contiguity and distance on the direct passions. I choose "proximity" instead of "contiguity," because it seems to better capture Hume's way of describing the distance between the agent and her interest, and because the central cases in *Treatise* 3.2 are temporal cases (long-term versus short-term interest). Collier refers to this principle as "a propensity toward temporal discounting," and he explicitly notes its connection to self-control ("Hume's Natural History of Justice," 136). Cohon refers to this principle as "temporal myopia" ("Shackles of Virtue," 397).

31 See also, "Of the Origin of Government" (38).

32 See also, T 3.2.5.4; 3.2.5.9 (SBN 517; 521).

33 In his reprise of these sections in the essay "Of the Origin of Government," Hume emphasizes that this remedy is palliative, not curative (38). Human beings cannot rid themselves of this weakness, and so "they must institute some persons . . . whose particular office it is, to point out the degrees of equity, to punish transgressors, to correct fraud and violence, and to oblige men, however reluctant, to consult their own real and permanent interests. In a word, Obedience is a new duty which must be invented to support that of Justice" (38).

34 It is not entirely clear *how* setting up government is supposed to work. As I suggest here, while the would-be governors may "change their situation" and so set up a different "nearest interest," the would-be subjects may be plausibly described as being motivated by fear of contempt and punishment *while still* affected by the proximity principle. This would cohere with Hume's advice that "when we wou'd govern a man, and push him to any action, 'twill commonly be a better policy to work upon the violent rather than the calm passions, and rather take him by his inclination, than what is vulgarly call'd his *reason*" (T 2.3.4.1; SBN 419). But see Cohon, "Shackles of Virtue," for an examination of some of the issues with Hume's account, and an attempt to resolve them. See also Collier for a circularity objection, namely that Hume's account of the origin of government supposes that the agents are capable of the kind of collective action that government is supposed to enable (141). I agree with Collier that the most mysterious part of Hume's story is the moment when the group of pre-civil

human beings simultaneously have a strong desire to set up government. I can only think that Hume is seeing the situation of these people as one of such desperation and such restricted resources that they look to the strongest member of their tribe or clan to lead them and force them to act in their own interest. Hume offers such a story in T 3.2.8.2 (SBN 540–41) about how a military leader comes to become a civil leader; and he discusses the choice of a leader in the essay "Of the Origin of Government," there claiming that the initial leader is likely to be someone "endowed with superior mental qualities of valour, force, integrity, or prudence, which command respect and confidence" (39).

35 See T 3.2.2.9; 3.2.5.9 (SBN 489, 521).

36 I am grateful to an anonymous referee for pressing me to clarify my argument in this section.

37 McIntyre, "Strength of Mind" and Radcliffe, "Strength of Mind." This is another fraught interpretive issue, and I cannot do full justice to the many intricacies involved. For further work on Hume's distinction between natural and artificial virtue, see, *inter alia*, Abramson, "What's So 'Natural' about Hume's Natural Virtues?"; Cohon, "Hume's Artificial and Natural Virtues"; Fieser, "Hume's Motivational Distinction between Natural and Artificial Virtues"; O'Day, "Hume's Distinction."

38 *Pace* McIntyre, I argue that strength of mind *does* depend on a specific convention, but not in the way that justice or fidelity does. Strength of mind does not depend on a specific convention for its very existence, but rather for its development and for its pervasive presence in society.

39 Radcliffe complicates this affinity by showing that there is no single identifiable motive that we approve of when we approve of strength of mind. She suggests that "the way to understand strength of mind is . . . not as any particular motive, but as a constellation of traits comprising certain calm passions" ("Strength of Mind," 564).

40 Although I cannot argue for this claim in this paper, if I am right that the institution of government is required to enable the societal development of strength of mind, then the institution of government may also be required for the development of the various natural virtues into their full-blown forms. This is because the general point of view, which is the standpoint from which moral sentiments are properly felt, seems to require some artificial construction and agreement (see Baier, "some artifice, in the sense of thoughtful design and contrivance, seems involved in that point of view [from which the natural virtues are recognized] itself" [*Progress of Sentiments*, 177]). Furthermore, as Abramson suggests, "our innate affective dispositions require education in order to *acquire* the appropriate range of objects, strength, responsiveness, etc., before they are candidates for natural *virtues*" ("What's So 'Natural' about Hume's Natural Virtues?" 339, emphasis in original). If Baier and Abramson are correct, then some artifice would be necessary for the recognition of natural motives as virtuous motives, as well as for the development of our natural dispositions and motives into the forms we currently recognize as virtues. See also Tolonen, *Mandeville and Hume*, chap. 4.

41 As Tolonen observes, natural affection and other natural virtues are "latent features of human nature," features that require "time and social development" in order to be effective (*Mandeville and Hume,* 160). Strength of mind is also a latent feature of human

nature, it just happens to be one that needs a much more complex set of conditions for its development.

42 Actual widespread failure to regulate one's conduct is not necessary, for it is enough to recognize one's own weakness, and to believe that weakness to be shared throughout society; see T 3.2.7.3 (SBN 535).

43 Cf. Hume's account in the essay "Of the Origin of Government," of how obedience and allegiance come to become strong motives in us: "Habit soon consolidates what other principles of human nature had imperfectly founded; and men, once accustomed to obedience, never think of departing from that path, in which they and their ancestors have constantly trod, and to which they are confined by so many urgent and visible motives" (39).

44 This story is repeated in T 3.2.5.12 (SBN 523), regarding the way in which a moral sentiment comes to be attached to the artificial virtue of fidelity to promises, and at T 3.2.8.7 (SBN 546), regarding the way a moral sentiment comes to be attached to allegiance and loyalty to government.

45 This process also occurs within the family in the earlier, pre-government stage, when "custom and habit, operating on the tender minds of the children, makes them sensible of the advantages, which they reap from society, as well as fashions them by degrees for it, by rubbing off those rough corners and untoward affections, which prevent their coalition" (T 3.2.2.4; SBN 486). Custom and habit are the great engines driving the slow progress of sentiments and the gradual regulation of passions.

46 One might worry that this account of how strength of mind is enabled by the institution of government cannot be correct, for strength of mind is a rare virtue, even in today's societies. I disagree that strength of mind is rare, and I think Hume would as well. Strength of mind in its outstanding forms, or in extraordinary instances, may indeed be rare, but strength of mind, understood as the capacity to regularly restrain one's present desires and passions so as to pursue one's long-term interests, is so pervasive as to be easily overlooked. Many of us brush our teeth regularly (even if we'd like to just go to sleep), get regular exercise (even though the couch is more comfortable), keep our judgmental comments to ourselves (even though we think we're right), follow traffic rules (even when they're inconvenient), and so on. The spectacular failures of strength of mind are more noticeable because they're perceived against a background of regular, if mundane successes. I thank an anonymous referee for pressing me to consider this objection.

47 For different versions of what this post-government development might look like, see Harris, "Compleat Chain of Reasoning"; McIntyre, "Strength of Mind"; Abramson, "Two Portraits of the Humean Moral Agent"; and Magri, "Natural Obligation." As mentioned at the end of Part One above, the views offered by Harris and McIntyre emphasize the importance of the social nature of the passions and sympathy in strengthening the calm passions and developing strength of mind.

48 A frequently-used image in popular psychology books and articles; for instance, Baumeister and Tierney, *Willpower*.

49 The model familiar from Descartes and Malebranche (see especially the opening scene of Dialogue 1 in Malebranche's *Dialogues Concerning Metaphysics and Religion*).

50 Saint Augustine's *Confessions* provides perhaps the best-known version of this model.

51 Indeed, Hume's essay "The Skeptic" offers a biting mockery of this tradition (see 173–77).

52 It is also strikingly *secular* in comparison to the standard accounts, but this is a vast issue that I do not touch on here. While it may not be entirely surprising that Hume was willing to break with tradition here as well as elsewhere, it *is* surprising that Hume's conception of self-control (such as it is) is also quite different from a fellow sentimentalist's, namely from Adam Smith's. Smith was willing to follow Hume in several significant philosophical points; most significantly, perhaps, Smith took Hume's arguments against the motivational power of reason on board largely without comment. But Smith's conception of self-control, "self-command" in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, is hardly as radical as Humean strength of mind. While Smithian self-command also breaks with many aspects of tradition, it nonetheless places a good deal of control in the hands of the agent who seeks to command her passions and sentiments. See my "Sentimentalizing Self-Command" for further discussion of Smithian self-command.

53 See Hume's descriptions in T 2.3.4–9 (SBN 418–48).

54 Hume writes, "[t]he philosopher, if he be consistent, must apply the same reasoning to the actions and volitions of intelligent agents. The most irregular and unexpected resolutions of men may frequently be accounted for by those who know every particular circumstance of their character and situation. A person of an obliging disposition gives a peevish answer: But he has the toothache, or has not dined. A stupid fellow discovers an uncommon alacrity in his carriage: But he has met with a sudden piece of good fortune. Or even when an action, as sometimes happens, cannot be particularly accounted for, either by the person himself or by others; we know, in general, that the characters of men are, to a certain degree, inconstant and irregular. This is, in a manner, the constant character of human nature; though it be applicable, in a more particular manner, to some persons who have no fixed rule for their conduct, but proceed in a continued course of caprice and inconstancy. The internal principles and motives may operate in a uniform manner, notwithstanding these seeming irregularities; in the same manner as the winds, rain, cloud, and other variations of the weather are supposed to be governed by steady principles; though not easily discoverable by human sagacity and enquiry" (EHU 8.15; SBN 88). See also T 2.3.1.9–10 (SBN 402).

55 See also Tolonen, *Mandeville and Hume*, 245.

56 See also Baier, *Cautious Jealous Virtue*, 133.

57 One that seems close to the cognitive behavioral therapy of our day, which seeks to change patterns of thought and behavior by changing the "circumstances and situation" of individuals.

58 See Korsgaard, "Normativity of Instrumental Reason" for a similar observation, framed as a criticism. See also Baier, *Cautious Jealous Virtue*, 220. Hume may have consciously avoided compounds like "self-control" and "self-command," preferring "strength of mind" instead. There is one use of "self-command" in EPM, and it occurs during Hume's discussion of chastity. Hume asks: "But by what action can a woman, whose behavior has once been dissolute, be able to assure us, that she has formed

better resolutions, and has self-command enough to carry them into execution?" (6.14; SBN 239). Interestingly, self-command is considered here from the spectator's position—how could a "dissolute" woman convince a spectator that she is, in fact, self-commanded? In EHU, Hume uses "self-command" only to refer to its weakness in us (7.18–19; SBN 68).

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