TERENCE PENELHUM

5 Hume's moral psychology

Within Hume's philosophical system and his account of human nature one finds a number of elements that are intimately related to his moral objectives. I refer, widely, to his moral objectives, rather than more restrictedly to his ethical theory, because his whole system has a moral thrust that can be discerned in many places where the immediate subject-matter is not ethical at all.

I. HUME AND HIS PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM

In 1927, A. E. Taylor concluded his Leslie Stephen Lecture *David Hume and the Miraculous* with a judgement of Hume's attitude to his philosophical work that has been held by many others:

> What kind of response one makes to life will, no doubt, for better or worse, depend on the sort of man one is for good or bad. . . . But we can all make it our purpose that our philosophy, if we have one, shall be no mere affair of surface opinions, but the genuine expression of a whole personality. Because I can never feel that Hume's own philosophy was that, I have to own to a haunting uncertainty whether Hume was really a great philosopher, or only a "very clever man."[1]

Taylor is here expressing an attitude toward Hume that many of us have felt: that his philosophy does not deserve to be taken too much to heart, because for all his intellectual vitality and the disturbing character of much that he says, there is a streak of frivolity in him that leads him to follow arguments to outrageous conclusions without serious consideration of the effect such conclusions may have on those who are driven to them; and that the love of literary reputa-

tion that he openly expressed, was of far greater personal importance to him than philosophical truth.

This estimate of Hume is a deeply mistaken one, and it involves a misconstruction of elements in his writings and his personality that have a very different explanation.

There is no doubt that Hume writes with a lightness of touch, an ironic humor, and a degree of self-depreciation that are rare among great philosophers. He is not hard enough to read for a judgement of greatness to come readily to our minds, in fact. He is also able to deal with the issue immediately before him without labouring its connections with those other parts of his system not presently being considered; and this, too, to readers in an era when system-building is unfashionable, makes it harder to suppose he is trying to construct one in the way great philosophers do. And no thinker who is so frequently successful in the art of philosophical criticism can escape the charge of caring first and foremost about scoring points. Such features are most easily explained as the result of a temperamental immunity to philosophical anxieties.

But the evidence is clearly against this explanation, and another is called for. The lightness is deliberately assumed for philosophical reasons by someone who is not immune to philosophical anxieties but knows very well, and says, what it is like to be their victim. There are two well-known places where he tells us about this. One, not originally destined for our eyes, is the letter he wrote to an unnamed physician in 1734, did not (it seems) send, but preserved (KHL). In this letter he outlines, with remarkable acuity, the symptoms of breakdown that he had suffered as a result of his philosophical exertions in the period prior to the composition of the *Treatise* – symptoms such as "scurvy spots" on the fingers, "wateriness in the mouth," and a compulsive appetite, which he interpreted as signs of the "disease of the learned." The other is the famous concluding section of Book 1 of the *Treatise* itself, where he tells us of the effects that his researches have had upon him (T 1.4.7, 263–74). He fancies himself to be "some strange uncouth monster," to be "in the most deplorable condition imaginable, inviron'd with the deepest darkness, and utterly depriv'd of the use of every member and faculty." On both occasions, he seeks release from these anxieties, which are the dark underside of the intellectual exhilaration that so frequently bursts through in the text of the *Treatise*; and this release

is something he thinks to be available to him only if he makes himself balance the excesses of his philosophical reflections with deliberate absorption in business or social activities. These allow the resources of his nature to overcome the debilitating effects of over-indulgence in philosophical reasoning.

This clear evidence shows us that Hume was not someone for whom philosophy was an activity of minor consequence, but someone who saw himself as likely to be thrown off balance by his predilection for it. So the affable and corpulent gentlemanly loiterer (to use a phrase from Taylor)[2] whom some see as the historical Hume is, at most, a deliberately assumed *persona* beneath which a much more complex and serious reality is at work. The *persona* is not the duplicate of the reality, but a product of experience and theory: experience of what philosophy leads to when practised in a way that does violence to our nature, and a theory that puts philosophy in its proper place.

What sort of theory is it? Any theory that suggests limits be placed on philosophy itself has an appearance of inconsistency if it is itself a philosophical theory; and the fact that Hume belongs somewhere in the sceptical tradition might seem to accentuate this risk. To a large extent, Hume's theory of human nature is not, in our terms, philosophical, but psychological, even though one of its key purposes is to determine the proper limits of philosophical thought. He certainly thinks that philosophical activity, properly pursued, sustains personal equilibrium and can keep threats to it in check – as when it protects us from the far more dangerous risks that arise from superstition (T 1.4.7, 271–2). But to know when to pursue philosophy and when not, one has to understand human needs and weaknesses, and make philosophy take account of them. Hume does not *confuse* philosophy and psychology, as some suppose; but he does mix them, in a special blend of his own.

Hume, then, is a Socratic thinker. He believes that in order to avoid being plagued by anxiety we must achieve self-knowledge. The philosopher stands in need of it as much as his fellows do. Socrates would have agreed; but he did appear to think that self-knowledge was to come through the pursuit of the dialectical questioning in which the philosopher is expert, whereas Hume does not think this. Hume thinks that he has available a scientific mode of understanding that illuminates our nature for us, and that the phi-

losopher must turn to this to save himself. Our nature is intelligible; and once we have learned its key features, we can avoid those influences in philosophy (and in religion) that would lead us to do violence to it. The understanding of human nature that Hume urges upon us is very different, indeed, from that deriving from Socrates, at least as Plato presents him to us.

II. HUMAN NATURE, THE SELF, AND THE PASSIONS

Hume confidently proclaims the importance of his theory of human nature in the introduction to the *Treatise*:

> Here then is the only expedient, from which we can hope for success in our philosophical researches, to leave the tedious lingring method, which we have hitherto followed, and instead of taking now and then a castle or village on the frontier, to march up directly to the capital or center of these sciences, to human nature itself. . . . There is no question of importance, whose decision is not compriz'd in the science of man; and there is none, which can be decided with any certainty, before we become acquainted with that science. In pretending therefore to explain the principles of human nature, we in effect propose a compleat system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security. (T Intro, xvi)

This is ambitious language, fully comparable to Descartes's claim, a century earlier, to be rebuilding all knowledge afresh. But the bases the two thinkers offer for this rebuilding are very different. The differences help us to understand why Hume has always had the reputation of being a spoiler rather than a builder, in spite of the positive thrust of this programmatic proclamation.

In Descartes's reconstruction of human knowledge, the metaphysical separation of the mental and the physical dictates limits to science: science gets the autonomy that it deserves (and which the church had denied it in condemning Galileo) because it is confined in its subject-matter to the physical world; the mind is exempted from scientific scrutiny because of its simplicity, its freedom, and its self-consciousness. The essence of Hume's reconstruction is to be found in the insistence that there can, indeed, be a science of mind, and that it is "experimental," or observational. The scientific ideal Hume has is often described as Newtonian, and the evidence for this claim is his proclamation of the theory of the association of ideas.

This theory seems to duplicate Newtonian explanation in the physical realm. It does so by identifying, first, the ultimate corpuscular units that our observation of mental life reveals to us; Hume calls these *perceptions* and divides them into *impressions* and *ideas*. He then provides a principle roughly corresponding to that of gravitation to account for the constant inner movement and change that characterize the mental life we are able to introspect. This analogue to gravitation is *association*, which determines one perception to call up, or lead on to, another. In spite of a wise and cautionary statement that "we are only to regard it as a gentle force, which commonly prevails" (T 1.1.4, 10), the gravitational analogy is offered with pride, along with a similarly Newtonian reticence about what may lie beneath that gentle force:

> Here is a kind of ATTRACTION, which in the mental world will be found to have as extraordinary effects as in the natural, and to shew itself in as many and as various forms. Its effects are every where conspicuous; but as to its causes, they are mostly unknown, and must be resolv'd into *original* qualities of human nature, which I pretend not to explain. (T 1.1.4, 12–13)

In the *Abstract*, his own anonymous puff of the *Treatise*, Hume says that if anything justifies calling "the author" an inventor, it is the use he makes of the principle of association.

Peter Jones has argued, persuasively, that the influence of Newton on Hume has been overrated, and that Hume's direct acquaintance with Newton's writings was probably limited.[3] This may be true. It may also be that the doctrine of association is less prominent in his later writings than it is in the *Treatise*, and that the *Treatise* itself, as we shall see, leans heavily on psychological theories that do not combine with it without difficulty. Nonetheless, I think that the impact of something like a Newtonian picture of the science of mind lingered in Hume's system long after the details of associationism ceased to interest him. There are two places where this can be seen most clearly. One is in his view of the self. The other is in his famous claim that reason is the slave of the passions. In both these places we find ourselves at the heart of his moral psychology.

To say there can be a science of the mental, as Hume sees the matter, is to say that what we think, feel, or will can be explained as the effect of a cause and the instance of a natural law. Human minds are not strangers in nature, but inextricably parts of it. Hume tries to

demonstrate this in detail in the *Treatise* by showing how our beliefs and our emotive and conative commitments arise. The accounts are intended to treat thoughts and feelings and volitions (all *perceptions*, in his vocabulary) as the units of explanation, and to show how they give rise to one another. This form of explanation, at least nominally, gives the mind *itself* no role to play. If the never-ending changes in the physical world are all to be explained in terms of the attraction of material particles to one another, there is no room for the suggestion that the world itself, which merely *contains* them, exerts a force of its own. It is just the place where the events being described occur. Similarly, if the course of my mental history is determined by the associative attraction of my perceptions, so that they cause one another to arise, there seems no place, perhaps even no clear sense, to the suggestion that *I*, the mind or soul that *has* them, can exert any influence over their course. All the mind does is *include* them. The self, or ego, as he says, is just "a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance." The denial of an independent real self is not an awkward consequence of Hume's theory of knowledge, which requires us to say that it is not there because we cannot find it when we look for it (although this is true); it is a cornerstone of his system, required by the supposed fact of a science of man conceived in quasi-Newtonian terms. This science is deterministic, since mental events occur as a result of laws that supposedly govern the sequences of such events alone; and if they mention minds or agents themselves, these are construed to be mere bundles, collections, or sequences of such events. "They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is compos'd" (T 1.4.6, 253).

This understanding of human nature stands in sharp contrast to another, which for convenience I shall call the rationalist model. This derives, historically, from Plato's *Phaedo*, in which Socrates is presented as teaching that the human soul is not part of nature but is alien to it. It can choose how far it allies itself with the alien forces of its present environment, and how far it asserts its independence from them. These alien forces make inroads upon it through the passions and desires, to which the soul can say yes or no. The implication of this understanding is that some of the elements of our inner life, namely, the passions and desires, are not truly parts of

ourselves at all; what is to be identified with the true self is the reason that says yes or no to them.

This Platonic view of the soul has taken deep root in our culture in many popular, and sophisticated, doctrines that are not overtly ascribed to Plato. There is the common contrast between reason and the passions, a contrast that yields the assumption that when one acts from passion one acts *in passivity*, so that what one does is not fully an act at all, or that one is not fully oneself in doing it. There is the correlative assumption, philosophically expressed in modern times in the Cartesian tradition, that the self is to be equated with the rational faculty and that one is fully oneself only when this faculty dictates what one believes and what one chooses. Descartes indeed carried this to the extent of holding that one has full freedom whether to say yes or no, not only to the passions, but to the presentations of sense, so that we can always suspend judgement when grounds are inconclusive.[4] This theory is the epistemological aspect of the general view that the unique dignity of the human soul consists in its possession of a special kind of freedom to assent to, or to reject, the promptings of the senses, the emotions, and the instincts. We can readily wonder whether all the elements in this view of ourselves are necessarily connected, and even whether they are consistent, but they are all powerfully present in popular culture and rationalist philosophical theory.

Hume's understanding of human nature is at odds with this rationalist picture of it at every important point, and he sees all its main contentions as inconsistent with the very possibility of a science of man. So he assaults it in every possible way, and in assaulting it ensures that he acquires a destructive reputation among philosophers who feel the dignity of human nature and the dignity of their own profession are both linked to the truth of the rationalist picture. One way Hume assaults that picture is by making statements of high shock-value for those whose thinking is formed by it. The most famous of these is his dictum that "reason 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, 415). This dictum is fundamentally an insistence that there can be a science of human nature in a way the rationalist picture would (in Hume's opinion) make impossible. It is, of course, more than this: it is also a claim that when we look and see, we shall find that human beings are creatures

of instinct and feeling whose rational powers cannot, or at least should not, be used in any way at odds with these instincts and feelings.

Norman Kemp Smith and others have made it clear that Hume's theory of knowledge is itself an application of this claim about human nature.[5] Hume sees our most fundamental beliefs as products of instinct; and he thinks we are lucky that they are. The rational queries of the philosophical sceptic would have the effect, if the rationalist view of the mind were true, of reducing us to a condition of chronic anxiety and indecision through our inability to justify the claims of our senses or the expectation of regularity in nature or the identity of the self. The sceptic is quite right about what we cannot rationally justify, but he is also, fortunately, quite wrong about what we are able to disbelieve. His doubts are intellectually correct but are *vain* or impotent doubts. Hume is himself a sceptic in his estimate of the soundness of sceptical arguments but sides with the most truculent of the common-sense philosophers in denying that these arguments can disturb us for more than brief periods.[6] These brief periods, however, are anxious ones, to be avoided by distraction, social or intellectual. Hume rejects the contention of the sceptics of antiquity that the recognition of reason's inability to support the commitments of common sense leads of itself to inner peace. On the contrary, as he makes clear in the concluding section of Book I of the *Treatise*, such recognition would lead to despair if not overcome by the resources of instinct.

Hume does see our nature as creative: in generating our fundamental beliefs, it invests our perceptions with meaning. But it is instinct and not reason that does this.

Why is it that our instincts manage to invest our perceptions with meanings that are so useful and adaptive? Hume does not profess to know and contents himself with an ironical suggestion that there must be a pre-established harmony at work (EHU 5.2, 54). He never says the lifeworld our instincts create for us is one we know to be the true one.[7] His view of our beliefs is essentially a Darwinian view.

I turn now to a more detailed account of the way Hume's view of human nature underlies his account of our conduct and our morality, leaving aside his epistemology with the comment that, as Kemp Smith made clear to us, Hume's views on the interrelation between reason and passion run parallel in the two areas.

III. HUMAN CHOICE AND THE PASSIONS

Epistemology has never had much of a place in popular culture. But the rationalist understanding of human nature has a strong hold on the common understanding of our choices. We pride ourselves on the supposed fact that we are able sometimes to choose courses of action that override our passions and desires in the light of a greater good. We pride ourselves on the supposed fact that when we do this, we exercise the power to be free from the influences and temptations that would otherwise condemn us to what Kant called heteronomy. And we particularly pride ourselves on the supposed fact that we are able to pursue the austere demands of duty and so, by putting inclination aside, function as pillars of society.

Hume denies none of the experiences on which these popular self-estimates depend. We can, and do, choose the good over the attractive and resist many of the passions that agitate us. We are, indeed, entitled to talk of ourselves as acting freely on many such occasions – and also on those when we yield to passions, and choose the attractive rather than the good. And we do, indeed, choose many actions because they are our duty, even though they do not appeal to us, and our society depends for its health on the fact that we do this. But none of these familiar experiences is to be interpreted in the way rationalists interpret them. I shall take each of these three popular views in order, and try to show how Hume offers an alternative account of the relevant phenomena. I begin with those occasions when we pursue our good in the face of inclination.

The rationalist holds that when I do this, reason triumphs over passion. Hume's alternative account of this familiar experience depends upon his analysis of the passions, which he develops at length in the largely neglected second book of the *Treatise*.[8]

The two technical classifications that are essential for understanding Hume's analysis of conflict and choice are his distinctions between direct and indirect passions, and between calm and violent passions. Both distinctions are introduced in the first section of Book 2 (T 2.1.1, 276–7). Every passion is a unique, simple secondary impression. What makes it the passion it is, rather than some other, is therefore the felt quality it has. Questions about how it arises and how it leads to other experiences or to actions are construed by Hume as causal questions to be dealt with within his Newtonian

mental science. In calling them secondary impressions, Hume seeks to distinguish them from the sensory impressions, which he calls "original" – a term indicating (here at least) that they do not occur in us in consequence of prior perceptions, as the secondary ones do. Passions, then, always arise in us from mental causes: sensory impressions, ideas, or other passions. When they arise from other passions, they do so by association. There is, therefore, an association of impressions (based on resemblance), as well as an association of ideas.

The distinction between direct and indirect passions is a distinction between two ways in which passions may arise. Direct passions "arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure," which seems to mean that they arise when something has given us pleasure or pain, or is believed to offer us the prospect of them (T 2.1.1, 276). This at least is what Hume says at the outset of Book 2; but when he discusses the direct passions in more detail later in the same book, he adds that some of them "frequently arise from a natural impulse or instinct, which is perfectly unaccountable," a remark that comes close to making them original after all (T 2.3.9, 439).[9] The indirect passions "proceed from the same principles, but by the conjunction of other qualities" (T 2.1.1, 276). This "conjunction" is described in much detail in parts 1 and 2 of Book 2; but the key element in it is the fact that the indirect passions require a distinction between their *causes* and their *objects*: between roughly the qualities that occasion them and the persons (that is, oneself or another or others) who have them.[10] The fundamental indirect passions are those of pride and humility (that is, shame), where the object is oneself, and love and hatred, where the object is another person or persons. In each case, the passion only arises when we are conscious not only of the quality that causes it, but of the fact that it is possessed by, or due to, the self or another – the "object, to which it is directed" (T 2.1.3, 280).

The direct passions are a very mixed group, indeed; but the critical fact about them for present purposes is that they not only include such reactive emotions as joy or grief or despair, but some of the most fundamental determinants of human conduct, namely, the *desires*. Hume not only includes desires for perceived objects like clothes, or for bodily satisfactions like food or sex, but mentions "the desire of punishment to our enemies, and of happiness to our

friends" (T 2.3.9, 439), and even "the general appetite to good, and aversion to evil, consider'd merely as such" (T 2.3.3, 417). It does not seem particularly natural to write of desires as passions, unless they are agitating and overwhelming ones, but Hume's psychology depends on his being able to counter our resistance to his doing this. This he does by means of his important distinction between calm and violent passions. When introducing this distinction, Hume says that it is common for us to distinguish between gentle and intense emotions, and to use the word "passion" only of the latter, but he calls this a "vulgar and specious division" (T 2.1.1, 276). One and the same passion can be both mild and intense, though a given passion will usually be one or the other. It is critically important that when a passion has become "the predominant inclination of the soul, it commonly produces no longer any sensible agitation" (T 2.3.4, 419). We must therefore distinguish between the violence of a passion, which is a matter of its felt intensity, and its strength, which is a matter of its degree of influence on our choices and conduct. A passion can be strong but calm; and such a passion may overcome a more violent or agitating one. This is presumably what happens when we choose the good over the alluring – so that the aching longing for the dessert loses out to the wish to stay slim, which agitates not at all. So those occasions when we think our reason has won out over passion are actually cases in which a calm passion has shown more strength than a violent one.[11]

The doctrine of calm passions is Hume's main card in the game against rationalist psychology. Its main internal difficulty is the fact that it requires him to say that passions can be "in a manner, imperceptible," while classing them as impressions (T 2.1.1, 276), despite the fact that he has earlier distinguished impressions from ideas on the basis of their force and vivacity and has even used the very word "violence" in doing so (T 1.1.1, 1).

He supports his positive analysis of choice by some famous negative arguments against rationalism. They are to be found in *Treatise* 2.3.3, entitled "Of the influencing motives of the will." They are intended to show that "reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will" and that "it can never oppose passion in the direction of the will" (T 2.3.3, 413). Hume argues for the first contention in two ways: he says that reason has two functions only, namely, the discovery of relations of ideas, as in mathematics, and

the description of matters of fact, as in the empirical sciences and common life.[12] Reason in the former function has practical import only when calculation plays a role in empirical investigation; and in its empirical function reason can affect practice only by showing us the causes or effects of objects that we already desire or shun. In other words, it is our desires that prompt us to pursue or flee from the objects of our choice. Reason merely shows us what leads to, or away from, that in which our desires make us take interest. It is never itself the source of such interest.

If reason is thus shown to be incapable of originating our choices and inclinations, then on those occasions when we make choices in opposition to a passion, it cannot be reason that moves us: reason cannot provide the necessary contrary "impulse" itself. At most, reason can serve the several desires or aversions that are in conflict.

Hume tries to clinch these arguments by drawing on a fundamental feature of his theory of the passions: that they are secondary impressions, and not ideas. Only ideas, because they are copies, have "reference to any other object," whereas passions, as impressions, do not have any such "representative quality." They cannot, therefore, be "contradictory to truth and reason," since such contradiction entails a defect in that very representative quality. This self-containedness, or lack of reference, that supposedly characterizes all passions is a feature of them even when they are desires. Hume gives the example of anger, which on his view is a desire for harm to another (what we would call hostility). "When I am angry," he says, "I am actually possest with the passion, and in that emotion have no more a reference to any other object, than when I am thirsty, or sick, or more than five foot high" (T 2.3.3, 415).

As a consequence of this wildly implausible denial of the intentionality of passions and desires, Hume maintains that they cannot properly be called unreasonable. This term, though often applied to them, should, he says, be applied only to the judgements that *accompany* them. "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." Hence, there is no unreasonableness in preferring "the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger" or in choosing "my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an *Indian* or person wholly unknown to me," or to prefer my lesser good to my

greater (T 2.3.3, 416). None of these preferences requires any false judgements and could only be unreasonable if they did.

If we put aside the attention-drawing rhetoric, we can see that Hume does not deny reason an essential role in human conduct. Reason shows us how to satisfy our desires, and in enabling us to recognize that which we then come to want, it can even prompt them, although he does not concede this explicitly. What reason cannot do is to motivate us of itself. It is the *slave* of the passions. But there are many things that we can do with the help of a slave that we could not do if we did not have one, and for all the air of paradox with which Hume pronounces his theories, he does not deny this.[13]

IV. FREEDOM

Hume believes that if there is to be a science of human nature, our actions and choices must show the same sorts of regularity that we find in the physical world. In tracing our choices to the workings of the passions, which arise in us through the mechanisms of association, he has tried to show that these regularities do indeed govern those choices. Such a program seems to imply a denial of the freedom that we think distinguishes us from other beings, and that is associated in rationalist theory with the assertion of the supposed authority of reason. Hume seeks to show that his human science can accommodate our freedom without exempting human choice from the regularity and predictability that he finds in our natures. Hence, his philosophical system contains the best-known classical statement of what is now known as *compatibilism*.[14]

Compatibilism is the thesis that there is no inconsistency in holding that human actions are caused and yet are free. This is a logical thesis, normally combined with the substantive claim that our actions always *are* caused, and that they are sometimes free as well. I shall use the title to comprise the combination of all three propositions. I shall use the common term *libertarianism* to name the view that it is indeed inconsistent to hold human actions can be free yet always caused; that some of them are indeed free; and that some are therefore, in some manner, exempt from causation.

Hume's position is presented most clearly in section 8 of the first *Enquiry* (*An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*), though

most of what he says there is anticipated in *Treatise* 2.3.1–2. The *Treatise* version is more aggressive, and in the *Enquiry* he describes his argument as a "reconciling project." This phrase might suggest that he thinks his position is fully in accord with common sense, but it clearly is not, and Hume does not seriously pretend it is. What he thinks he is reconciling are the needs of a human science and the needs of our ordinary moral discourse, and he argues that common opinion is in error about those needs. Popular opinion holds that we need one sort of freedom that we do not have, instead of another that we do have.

In the *Treatise*, Hume uses scholastic terminology to name these two kinds of freedom: he distinguishes between "liberty of spontaneity" and "liberty of indifference" (T 2.3.2, 407). Liberty of spontaneity consists in the absence of hindrances to the execution of one's decisions. He describes it in the *Enquiry* thus: "*a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will*; that is, if we choose to remain at rest, we may; if we choose to move, we also may." He immediately adds that it is possessed by "every one who is not a prisoner and in chains" (EHU 8.1, 95). He thinks, correctly, that this last claim is not controversial. He is also correct in thinking that liberty of spontaneity, so defined, is compatible with universal causation; for it is merely the absence of interference with the exercise of one's choices, not the absence of causal determination in the making of those choices.

Hume's view becomes controversial when he turns to the other sort of freedom, the freedom that we think we have, but that in his view we do not have. We think that sometimes, when we choose one way, we could equally have chosen another way. In Hume's language, we believe that sometimes, when we choose to remain at rest, we might (even though we do not) choose instead to move; and that if we choose to move, we might (even though we do not) choose instead to remain at rest. We believe in the reality of unexercised powers of choice and see this reality as essential to our freedom as agents. Hume calls this sort of freedom "liberty of indifference," interprets it as a denial of the universality of causation in human affairs, and insists we neither have it nor need it. Indeed, he believes the requirements of our moral thinking and decision making are inconsistent with its existence.

Hume attacks liberty of indifference in three ways. First, he as-

serts the universality of causation, and the unreality of chance, and emphasizes that human affairs do not differ in these respects from the natural world. For example: "It is universally allowed that nothing exists without a cause of its existence, and that chance, when strictly examined, is a mere negative word, and means not any real power which has anywhere a being in nature" (EHU 8.1, 95). To this dogmatic metaphysical argument, he adds that we can infer and predict human actions from the motives and characters of human agents in a way that is fully comparable to our ability to explain and predict natural phenomena; and when people seem to act in bizarre or unpredictable ways, we can postulate, and discover, hidden causes that account for this – again, as we are able to do for surprising physical events. So we must acknowledge "necessity" in human affairs, as well as in physical nature – this term being understood, as he stresses, in the same way as he has interpreted it in his earlier analysis of causal inferences. (It is important to recall that when Hume outlines what he calls some "corollaries" of that analysis in the *Treatise*, he remarks, with astonishing casualness, that "the distinction, which we often make betwixt *power* and the *exercise* of it, is . . . without foundation" [T 1.3.14, 171]. One of the ways in which we "often make" this distinction is, of course, in the commonplace ascription of an unexercised power of choice to agents.)

Hume's second line of attack on liberty of indifference is the more practical one that we need predictability in human affairs in order to make our decisions. He gives the melancholy example of the prisoner condemned to the scaffold, who recognizes he will get no help in escaping from his jailer or his guards by observing their characters, and decides that, rather than in trying to change their resolution, he would be better employed in trying to weaken the bars of his cell (T 2.3.1, 406). The multitude of examples that human experience offers us of regular connections between character and action would not be open to us if liberty of indifference were a reality.

Hume's third argument against liberty of indifference consists in refutations of the natural, but in his view misguided, suggestion that we can introspect its reality (T 2.3.1, 408). What he says here parallels the many important things he says in opposition to the claim that we can detect within ourselves the experience of the power that we ascribe to natural causes (see, for example, EHU 7.1, 64–9). Hume does not deny there are volitions, as some have;[15] he sees

them as a readily detectable component in the mechanism of human choice.[16] But he denies that we can ever detect that volitions are themselves "subject to nothing." Liberty of indifference, then, is a myth; but we have never had any need of it and, in fact, presuppose its absence in practical reflection. Its reality would be inconsistent with both morality and the possibility of a science of man, as Hume conceives that.

It is impossible here to explore the question of the relationship between human science and determinism, which is raised by Hume's stance. Instead, I mention an important implication of his view for his moral psychology.

If Hume is right, we are often in a position to enact the choices we make, and also to enact the alternative choices that we do not make. But we are never in a position to choose in a way other than the way we do choose. He believes in the reality of unexploited opportunities; but not in the reality of unexercised powers of choice. This entails, however, that moral praise or blame can never be applied on the ground that someone has chosen a course of action that he or she *need not have chosen*. Common opinion follows rationalism in thinking that this is the basis of much praise or blame; and Hume must deny it.

He does indeed deny it, and offers an account of moral virtue that connects it with the very predictability that he insists we can find in human affairs, not with the liberty of indifference that he says does not exist.

V. OBLIGATION AND VIRTUE

We have seen that Hume traces all choice to the passions and rejects the rationalist understanding of human freedom. But we are now led to what he seems to see as the major problem of his moral philosophy. Rationalists might concede the main features of his account of prudential choice but still say that when I choose what I think is good for me, instead of what I am now inclined to, I remain the servant of my desires. I do not cease to serve them when I merely postpone their satisfaction to the future. We do, however, sometimes manage to act in the face of all our desires, short-term or long-term. We do this when we act from duty. When we do this, reason does indeed triumph over passion.

The best-known version of this view from Hume's time is that of Joseph Butler, who insists on the supremacy of conscience in human nature.[17] He accords it supremacy over all other springs of action, including self-love, benevolence, and particular desires. Hume's account of our regard for duty is one that concedes the reality of duty but still derives this regard from our emotional natures as his science of man depicts them.

His account depends on a principle he enunciates as an "undoubted maxim," namely, "*that no action can be virtuous, or morally good, unless there be in human nature some motive to produce it, distinct from the sense of its morality*" (T 3.2.1, 479). He recognizes that this claim has to contend with the fact that we do sometimes act from a sense of duty alone; and his attempt to accommodate this fact is at the heart of his account of justice and is the most extensive and important of his three forms of attack on the rationalist view of human nature.

We must begin with his account of the role of the passions, or sentiments, of approval and disapproval, since he views the sense of duty as a derivative of these. Hume holds that moral judgements, in which we describe behavior as virtuous or vicious, express these sentiments. Like all other passions, they are unique secondary impressions and cannot therefore be analyzed; but we can say how they arise and what their effects are. The story is complex; but we can see at the outset that if, indeed, the sense of duty is a product of the sentiments of approval and disapproval, it is a product of sentiments that arise when we pass judgement on human behavior that must already be produced by something other than the approval and disapproval to which it gives rise. I draw in what follows on *Treatise* 3.3.1–3, and from the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (the second *Enquiry*), sections 5–8.

Hume maintains that moral approval and disapproval have human characters, rather than individual actions, as their objects. It is significant that he takes the terms "virtuous" and "vicious" as the paradigms of moral language, thus making it easier to persuade us that evaluations are directed toward persons rather than their deeds. "If any *action* be either virtuous or vicious, 'tis only as a sign of some quality or character." He says that actions that do not reflect settled states of character in their agents "are never consider'd in morality" (T 3.3.1, 575). Reason assists in the generation of approval

and disapproval by showing us the effects that certain states of character have. If by a disinterested examination (an examination conducted "without reference to our particular interest") we find that a particular character trait is agreeable or useful, or disagreeable or harmful, to the agent who has it, or to others, then the mechanism that generates approval or disapproval can commence (T 3.1.2, 472).

The mechanism is complex and involves the workings of the principle of *sympathy*. This principle is not to be confused with the sentiment of compassion, which is merely one of its products. The principle is the one that enables us to participate in the emotional life, and the pleasures and pains, of others. Hume first discusses sympathy in *Treatise* 2.1.11.[18] According to his account of it there, I become aware of the passion of another by observing its manifestations in his or her behavior; I have, therefore, an idea of it. So far, however, I am not moved by the other's passion. For this to happen, my idea has to be enlivened: then it will turn into an impression, and I shall have the very passion I have inferred in the other person. Hume says, to the regular surprise of the readers who encounter this so early in Book 2, with memories of *Treatise* 1.4.6 still in their minds, that what enlivens the idea I have of the other's passion is the "idea, or rather impression" of myself (2.1.11, 317). He cannot here refer to the impression of the pure ego that he so emphatically stated in Book 1 that he did not have, but must refer to "that succession of related ideas and impressions, of which we have an intimate memory and consciousness" (T 2.1.2, 277). This is so lively and vivid that its liveliness is communicated to the idea of the other's passion, which I then come to have myself. It can then lead on to other emotions, through the principle of association.

The sympathetic mechanism enables me to share in the pleasures and pains that are the effects, in the agent or others, of those character traits I am disinterestedly surveying. The association of impressions causes me then to experience approval (when these effects are pleasant) or disapproval (when they are painful). I *express* these sentiments in my moral judgements, and I call the character traits I have assessed in this way the virtues or vices, respectively, of individuals. (Their virtuousness or viciousness consists in their capacity to arouse these sentiments in observers; but these sentiments have not, of course, caused these character traits to be present in the observed agents in the first place.)

Hume describes approval and disapproval as calm forms of the indirect passions of love and hatred (T 3.3.5, 614). Love and hatred are caused by the qualities or actions of persons but have the persons themselves as their objects. Approval and disapproval are aroused by the qualities agents display but are directed towards the agents themselves as the bearers of the characters they manifest.

We have yet to account for the sense of duty, however. The account comes in two parts. The first is Hume's explanation of how it is that we sometimes perform acts from a sense of duty that others perform from (say) benevolence. He says that someone may be conscious of the fact that he lacks a character trait (such as kindness to children) that causes us to approve of those who have it. He may then come to "hate himself upon that account" and may perform the action "from a certain sense of duty, in order to acquire by practice, that virtuous principle" (T 3.2.1, 479). On this view, the sense of duty is a conscious substitute for more natural motives and is a product of self-hatred. To feel it is to feel the disapproval of your own lack of a virtuous inclination.

These phenomena occur, though we may well doubt whether they are the key to the *origin* of the sense of duty. But even if they are, they do not include a much larger range of cases: those occasions when we seem willing to act from duty even when there is no prior natural motive. These are the cases when we act from *justice*. There is no natural inclination (such as benevolence) to explain our willingness to pay our taxes or return money borrowed from bankers. Yet justice is esteemed as a virtue, and its denial is judged vicious.

The latter is the more important for the psychology of duty. The wider story of the nature and origins of justice cannot be told here.[19] But in Hume's system justice is not a natural virtue but an artificial one: that is, it is not a settled state of character that is due to innate causes within us but is a condition we acquire because of the influence on us of social institutions. We do have some socially unifying motives in our natural benevolence and love of family; but these motives are too restrictive to sustain large social groupings. We are able, however, to see the value of conventions that would safeguard such things as property rights, and we adopt them through an implicit recognition of common interests. Both in the *Treatise* and in the second *Enquiry*, Hume uses the analogy of oarsmen who row together without any explicit mutual undertaking to do so. Such

conventions often entail inconvenience for us, but we sustain them through self-interest.

Once these conventions are established, it is easy to understand how they acquire the extra status given them through the operation of approval and disapproval. Each of us is able, through sympathy, to be conscious of the unpleasant results of unjust actions for those who suffer from them. We may suffer from them ourselves. We express our displeasure at these effects by saying that just actions are our duty and avoid inner discomfort by doing our duty ourselves. Hence, justice becomes virtuous without being attractive. Hume's most succinct summary of his account of the genesis of the sense of duty is perhaps this:

> All morality depends upon our sentiments; and when any action, or quality of the mind, pleases us *after a certain manner*, we say it is virtuous; and when the neglect, or non-performance of it, displeases us *after a like manner*, we say that we lie under an obligation to perform it. (T 3.2.5, 517)

VI. HUME AND COMMON OPINION

For all his willingness to express himself paradoxically, Hume's moral psychology is designed to accommodate the phenomena of our daily moral experience, and to reject only a rationalist interpretation of them. He does not seek to overturn the moral conventions of common sense but, on the contrary, seeks to support them anew on foundations of experiment and observation, free of misleading and disruptive theory.[20] It is therefore important, in assessing his successes and failures, to determine how far his opinions conform to common opinion, and how far not.

I begin with a comment on his theory of obligation. For many readers, its very ingenuity presents an immediate difficulty. Is it so obvious that the sense of duty is derivative? Hume is free of the worldly-wise cynicism of psychological egoism. In the second appendix of the second *Enquiry* he argues against it, much in the manner of Joseph Butler, and maintains that those who hold it (like Hobbes) are forcing a theory on the observable facts of conduct.[21] But why not follow Butler further and say that the observable facts also show we have a natural tendency to feel and act on a sense of obligation? The reason is probably to be found not only in the determination to undermine ethical rationalism, but also in Hume's equally strong

determination to avoid any theory that might seem to require, or invite, theological underpinnings, and to offer instead a purely secular account of all the phenomena he explains. But in seeking to offer an explanation of conscience at all, instead of taking the fact of it as a datum as he takes benevolence to be, Hume is forced to interpret it as a product of the institutions of social justice, when the latter are probably regarded by most as deriving some of their hold on us from the power of our sense of obligation, not the other way about. The fact that many other philosophers try to explain them as deriving from self-interest, much as Hume does, puts them at odds with common opinion also.

There is another place where Hume's account of moral virtue puts him at odds with common opinion, and where he himself shows signs of greater discomfort at the fact. In his story of the ways we come to feel moral approval, he tells us that it is directed toward established character traits in our natures and arises when we disinterestedly recognize that these character traits are useful or agreeable to ourselves or others – that they have utility, in the language of the second *Enquiry*. This account prompts a question: there are many human characteristics that have utility in this way that we delight in, but are not objects of moral approval. Similarly, many human traits that are harmful or disagreeable do not elicit moral disapproval. We praise charm, wit, or eloquence, but not *in the manner* of benevolence, industry, or temperance. Why not? Hume addresses this potentially vexing question in *Treatise* 3.3.4, and in the fourth appendix to the second *Enquiry*. He tries to dismiss it as not "very material," and in entitling the *Enquiry* appendix "Of some verbal Disputes" evinces a lamentable and atypical inclination to dismiss a serious conceptual issue as what misguided theorists today sometimes call a "mere" question of semantics (T 3.3.4, 608).

But it *is* a problem; and Hume shows a degree of recognition of the sort of problem that it is by trying to fend off one possible explanation of the distinction we do indeed make between virtues, on the one hand, and talents, on the other. This is the suggestion that virtues are voluntarily acquired and talents are not. He says, perhaps correctly, that there is no ground for maintaining this and suggests instead that the relevant consideration is that virtues (and vices) can be changed by laws and by education, whereas talents cannot. This is interesting, but seems wrong: one thinks of the work of remedial

language instructors, long-suffering piano teachers, or physiotherapists, who all seem to be in the thankless but not-wholly-ineffectual business of modifying our talents by training.

What, then, is the ground of our distinction? We can approach it by noticing that in order to assimilate talents to virtues, Hume has to assume that the talents are used well or wisely. A virtue cannot (necessarily cannot) be used badly by its possessor, but a talent can.[22] A virtue is, in part, the predictable tendency to use some talent well, rather than badly. But using a talent well involves using it at the right times and not using it at the wrong times. We praise those who can be predicted to do this (by calling them virtuous), because they *choose* to use the talent when it is good to do so, and not to use it when it would be bad to do so. They are praiseworthy because they use the talent in good ways when they *could* use it in bad ways instead. We praise the predictability of virtuous action precisely because we think it could be done otherwise. On Hume's view of freedom, this is what we can never say about anyone's choices.

Hume's science of human nature, then, seems to have the unattractive consequence that we accord moral approval and disapproval to patterns of choice that could not be other than what they are. A good character is just a piece of good fortune. While popular ethical thinking is frequently forced to give ear to this view, it is still seen as paradoxical. Good character is, for the most part, still regarded as the regular tendency to make free choices that are good, not merely to perform pleasing acts habitually.

This brings us to the bedrock of Hume's understanding of what a science of human nature has to be like. I have suggested that the common distinction between virtues and talents, which he finds a source of difficulty, exists because the popular ascription of virtue to someone involves ascribing some degree of what Hume calls liberty of indifference to that person. But Hume would respond that this ascription entails the denial of the very predictability of human conduct that our ethical thinking requires, and is inconsistent with the scientific status of the study of mankind. Critics of a libertarian turn of mind would say that Hume's difficulties merely show we must jettison the Newtonian model of the human sciences. We must, they would say, accept that the social sciences are able to predict human behaviour (such as voting patterns) as well as they do because, in fact, most people do choose in roughly the same ways in

similar situations, even though they could, *if* they chose, not do so. But some people do, now and then, surprise us (when they could have chosen not to!) and we have to be content with statistical predictions in consequence.

So far, we have found aspects of Hume's moral psychology that are at odds with common opinion in ways that seem inevitable consequences of his understanding of the science of human nature. There is another well-known claim that he makes that is indeed at odds with common opinion, but in a way he could have avoided. This is his claim that erroneous or bizarre emotions are not contrary to reason. Hume recognizes that the understanding can give rise to passion by producing opinions that give rise to such states as grief or joy or resentment, or by prompting desires or volitions when we see that some course of action will lead to what we already want or think good. But he insists that this does not ever entitle us to call the passions or desires unreasonable, or to hold that "reason and passion can ever oppose each other, or dispute for the government of the will and actions" (T 2.3.3, 416). What Hume has done here is emphasize the importance of passion or desire in the genesis of choice and conduct, while continuing to accept, indeed to stress, the rationalist insistence on the sharp separation of reason and emotion. Hume teaches the *a-rationality* of passion where the rationalist teaches the *ir-rationality* of passion. Both, in fact, misinterpret common moral opinion, which is committed to neither view, but accepts that emotion, as well as opinion, can be both reasonable and unreasonable.

Hume seems to think that the only cases where the moral evaluations of common sense require the ascription of irrationality to the passions are cases where these are deemed to be the result of false judgements. But this is not so. On the contrary: if I pursue an objective that is harmful to me, because I mistakenly think it will be good for me, then my desire for it may be judged to be erroneous, since my judgement is; but it is not thereby judged to be unreasonable. If common sense agrees that the course I am following will lead to the objective I am pursuing, but holds me to be mistaken in thinking it will be good for me; or if common sense holds me to be right in thinking the objective I am pursuing would be good for me but wrong in thinking the course I am following will help me attain it, common sense is still likely to call my choice a *reasonable* one. The error of my judgement is the very thing that makes my action reason-

able in cases of this sort. If I grieve at the supposed loss of a loved one who is in fact alive and well, my grief is mistaken, but not unreasonable. We apply the term "unreasonable" to an emotion or to a desire where that emotion or desire is thought to be in some way *inappropriate* to the situation in which the agent finds himself, or herself – when it is the wrong way to respond, emotionally or conatively, to a situation of that sort. If the situation is not of that sort, the response is mistaken as well. But it can be quite free of error and still be either reasonable or unreasonable: by being moderate or excessive, helpful or unhelpful, sane or silly. These are all dimensions of rationality that can be manifested *by the passions themselves*. Hume has perceived the importance of the passions for all our choice and conduct but has mistakenly felt obliged to deny their rationality in order to accommodate this fact. In this respect, he shares with the rationalists whose theories he contests a mistaken estimate of the passions. This mistake is one from which common sense is already free.

VII. MORAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE SELF

We have seen that Hume's conception of a science of human nature reduces mental life to the interplay of impressions and ideas, and treats the mind itself as the theatre wherein this interplay occurs, not as a participant in it. The scholarly literature contains many criticisms and reappraisals of what Hume says about the self, almost all directed to his treatment of it in Book I of the *Treatise*. Two of the criticisms prominent in this literature are of particular importance.

The first criticism is that in spite of the quasi-Newtonian account of perceptions that Hume proclaims at the outset of the *Treatise*, and again in the first *Enquiry*, his accounts of the origins of our beliefs lean heavily on the ascription to us of propensities, tendencies, or habits. This leads some to suggest that he is committed to a crypto-Kantian psychology in which the subject of explanations is the mind and its dispositions, rather than the perceptions it contains.[23] The second criticism is that the ascription of a propensity (in this case the propensity to confuse one sort of succession with another) is essential to Hume's account of the genesis of the belief in the unity of the mind itself – thus opening him to the objection that he cannot explain how we come to have the belief he criticizes without first assuming its truth.[24]

It is possible to respond on Hume's behalf to the first criticism by suggesting that talk of the mind's propensities should be construed as popular shorthand for a genuinely Newtonian account that speaks instead of how impressions and ideas give rise to one another *in* the mind. It is possible to respond similarly to the second by saying that the perceptions the mind has can well include perceptions *of* the series that constitute it, without there having also to be any supervenient subject beyond the series' successive members. Such responses seem to save him from charges of formal inconsistency.

But the transition to the passages about the self in Book 2 is still a surprising one for the reader of Book 1. Hume has tried to prepare us for it by telling us to distinguish "betwixt personal identity, as it regards our thought or imagination, and as it regards our passions or the concern we take in ourselves" (T 1.4.6, 253). He also tries to ease the transition by clarifying his use of the term "self" in its first introduction in Book 2 as the name of the object of the indirect passion of pride: "This object is self, or that succession of related ideas and impressions, of which we have an intimate memory and consciousness" (T 2.1.2, 277). This makes it clear that he is not reverting to the pure owner-self whose existence he rejects so brusquely in Book 1. But this does not prepare us for the claim that "the idea, or rather impression of ourselves is always intimately present with us, and that our consciousness gives us so lively a conception of our own person, that 'tis not possible to imagine, that any thing can in this particular go beyond it" (T 2.1.11, 317). More serious perhaps, is the fact that the aetiology of the indirect passions requires the use of the idea of the self as *distinct from others*; and the account of the origins of our belief in self-identity in Book 1 is confined to our belief in the self's own inner unity over time and tells us nothing of how we come to be aware of the existence of other minds. This is a serious gap in his system, but perhaps not a manifest inconsistency. Let us turn instead to the role he ascribes to this lively notion of our self in our emotional life.

Whatever this role is, Hume does not think it undermines his Newtonian mental science. There is no place in his system for the suggestion that choices are the product of anything other than the series of passions and cognitions that lead to them. His denial of liberty of indifference permits no consideration of what has been called agent-causation: the theory that in free action it is the agent,

rather than the agent's desires or volitions, that is the *locus* of causality.[25] This denial is coupled with great stress on the claim that our understanding and evaluation of human agency depends on our recognition of settled states of character. This raises, in the sphere of action, a perplexity parallel to that raised by Hume's critics in the sphere of epistemology: that his view seems to require a continuing self that has the character traits he feels necessary for prediction and evaluation. We can perhaps offer a similar answer: that talk of an agent's character is shorthand for talk of that agent's emotions and desires.

However we respond to these difficulties of interpretation, there is a vital dimension to Hume's theory of the self in Book 2 that is only lately beginning to be recognized as central to his moral psychology.[26] It permeates his whole vision of the human condition. We find its clearest expression in the introduction of the principle of sympathy, in *Treatise* 2.1.11. Scholars have interpreted sympathy as a mechanism to explain my concern for others, which emerges through my having myself the very feelings I discern in them. This is correct, but incomplete. The principle is introduced by Hume as a "secondary" source of the self-regarding indirect passions of pride and humility. Pride does not merely come about through my taking pleasure in qualities that I recognize to belong to me; it also comes about through my sympathetically sharing the admiration (that is, in Hume's terms, the love) that others have toward me when they, too, discern these pleasing qualities. So my own pride is in part the product of the mentality of others, not only of my own. And since I am loved, or admired, for qualities I have or objects I possess, my emotional life is such that I shall pride myself on those qualities or objects for which others admire me and be ashamed of those qualities or objects for which they hate (or despise) me. They are the co-creators of my self-image, and to understand the character of my self-concern it is necessary to take the measure of the society of which I am a member.

As Annette Baier points out, many of the features others thus make part of my self-image will be physical ones, so the self of the passions is a physicalized construct, and not the quasi-solipsist monster of Book 1.[27] Once this is recognized, it is also evident that I sometimes come to have pride or humility in some characteristic I ascribe to myself only after others admire or despise it: their evalua-

tion of it and of me may not only augment my own, but actually engender it. And I may, of course, come to simulate, or actually develop, some character trait they would praise in order to prevent their blaming me (and hence my blaming myself) for its absence. This, as we have already seen, is part of Hume's account of the origin of the sense of duty, an account that seeks to turn the rationalist's key ethical endowment into an internalized social product (see again T 3.2.1, 479).

The sort of story this tells us about the self as social construction is one we have heard since from Freud, Marx, and the existentialists, always with ideological accretions wholly foreign to Hume's naturalism. His own summary statement is as follows: "In general we may remark, that the minds of men are mirrors to one another, not only because they reflect each others emotions, but also because those rays of passions, sentiments and opinions may be often reverberated, and may decay away by insensible degrees" (T 2.2.5, 365).

It is easy to see from this insistence that the self is not discernible within but largely ascribed by transference from without, why Hume has such deep hostility to all systems that view persons as alien to the social world they inhabit. His negativity toward rationalism and its craving for autonomy is the result of its being a theoretical force that can only encourage self-distancing from the sources of emotional nourishment that make us what we are. And his intemperate rejection of the religious austerities of the "monkish virtues" can be seen as having the same theoretical source (EPM 9.1, 270). Each is life-denying, and in a quite literal sense self-destructive. Human nature does not need to be mastered, nor does it need to be redeemed. It needs social nurture. Both reason and "true" religion are the *slaves* of the passions.

VIII. CONCLUSION

I have argued that Hume is a neo-Hellenistic thinker, one who follows the Stoics and Epicureans and Sceptics in maintaining that we should avoid anxiety by following nature. This prescription is notorious among philosophers for combining descriptive and normative elements. Hume is not, in any general way, confused between descriptive and normative claims: there is nothing in principle confused about seeing an understanding of our nature as a guide to one's

way of life, or even to the proper practice of philosophy. There is more than one way of getting and using such guidance. Hume thinks a philosopher must, first and foremost, learn to accept his or her nature for what it is. This means recognizing that it is so programmed that our instincts furnish us with beliefs that we cannot survive without, or supply independently, or seriously question. Faced with this fact, the philosophical enterprises of sceptical doubt and rationalist reconstruction are doomed to failure on psychological grounds alone, and the attempts to pursue them can only generate and exacerbate anxiety.

When we turn to Hume's moral thought, we find the parallel insistence that we must recognize the dominance of the passions in our nature, and not risk misery by attempting to follow eccentric programs of choice that frustrate them in the supposed interests of reason or the mortifications of religion. Once again, we have to accept our nature, not violate it. Here Hume risks confusion in a fundamental respect: while there is nothing incoherent in describing our nature and then saying we must accept it and not violate it, it *is* incoherent to say this if we are *unable* to violate this nature. To combine the descriptive with the normative without incoherence, it is necessary to permit freedom of choice in a form for which Hume's own account of liberty allows no space. The price of using the study of human nature as a guide to choice is the price of recognizing that it is part of our nature to be *able* to choose. But if this is admitted, we can then follow him in saying that if we make certain kinds of choice, we may ruin ourselves and end up anxious, or incapacitated, or otherwise miserable, by frustrating our basic needs. Read this way, his system tells us that the polite society human beings had by his day developed in property-owning Western Europe, with all its protective artifices, meets the needs of human nature better than its alternatives. While this may be judged by some to be complacent or enervating, the experience of more radical programs that are based on ideologies that attend less to the details of human nature should make us hesitate to dismiss his advice too readily.

NOTES

1 A. E. Taylor, *David Hume and the Miraculous* (Cambridge, 1927), pp. 53–4.

2 *David Hume and the Miraculous*, p. 53.
3 Peter Jones, *Hume's Sentiments: Their Ciceronian and French Context* (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 11–19.
4 See the Fourth Meditation, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, first published 1641.
5 See Norman Kemp Smith, "The Naturalism of Hume," *Mind* 14 (1905): 149–73, 335–47, and *The Philosophy of David Hume* (London, 1941). See also Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London, 1977), chap. 1.
6 I have discussed this issue more fully in my "Hume's Skepticism and the Dialogues," in *McGill Hume Studies*, ed. David Fate Norton, Nicholas Capaldi, and Wade L. Robison (San Diego, 1979), pp. 253–78.
7 This is what separates him so clearly from the common-sense school. On this point, see David Fate Norton, "Hume and His Scottish Critics," in *McGill Hume Studies*, pp. 309–24, and chap. 5 of his *David Hume: Common-Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician* (Princeton, 1982).
8 What follows here is not an attempt at the impossible feat of summarizing Book 2 in a few paragraphs, but an attempt to indicate the most important parts of its argument for the assessment of Hume's alternative to rationalism in moral psychology. I give a somewhat more detailed treatment in chapter 5 of my *Hume* (London, 1975). The clearest account of Book 2 is still that of Páll S. Árdal, *Passion and Value in Hume's* Treatise (Edinburgh, 1966). Important recent discussions are to be found in Nicholas Capaldi, *Hume's Place in Moral Philosophy* (New York, 1989), especially chap. 5; and Annette C. Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's* Treatise (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), especially chaps. 6 and 7.
9 This remark is probably intended to avoid the appearance of psychological hedonism that could be left by the earlier classification. Kemp Smith and Árdal have said that the passions Hume refers to here should be classified separately as primary, rather than direct, but I cannot follow up the merits of this suggestion here.
10 I have tried to distinguish what Hume means here from what analytical philosophers have intended by these terms in my *Hume*, chap. 5.
11 We owe the clear understanding of Hume's distinction between calm and violent passions to Árdal. See his *Passion and Value in Hume's* Treatise, pp. 95ff.
12 I use here the terminology that Hume presents later in Section 4 of the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*. It is clear that the same distinction is intended in this passage in T 2.3.3.
13 For important further discussion of these very complicated questions, see Norton, *David Hume*, chap. 3, and Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments*, chap. 7. An older but very shrewd discussion is to be found in Rachel

M. Kydd, *Reason and Conduct in Hume's* Treatise (Oxford, 1964), chap. 5.

14 Hume's views are anticipated by Thomas Hobbes in chap. 21 of *Leviathan*, first published in 1651.

15 The best-known case is Gilbert Ryle in *The Concept of Mind* (London, 1949), chap. 3.

16 I have briefly discussed Hume's views on this in my *Hume*, pp. 111–17. For a fuller treatment, see John Bricke, "Hume's Volitions," in *Philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Vincent Hope (Edinburgh, 1984), pp. 70–90.

17 Butler does avoid explicit commitment on whether conscience is best described as a rational power or as a moral sense. See his comments in his *Dissertation on Virtue*, vol. 2 of *The Works of Bishop Butler*, ed. J. H. Bernard (London, 1900), p. 287. But it seems clear that the role Butler ascribes to conscience is one for which Hume feels he must find an alternative consistent with his own science of man.

18 Sympathy seems to drop out of sight in the second *Enquiry*, and it has been a matter of considerable controversy whether this shows Hume to have abandoned it or not. For an argument that he has not, see the appendix to John B. Stewart, *The Moral and Political Philosophy of David Hume* (New York, 1963). For an argument that he has, see Capaldi, *Hume's Place in Moral Philosophy*, chap. 7.

19 For additional discussions of Hume on justice, see David Fate Norton, "Hume, Human Nature, and the Foundations of Morality," Part IV, this volume; and Knud Haakonssen, "The Structure of Hume's Political Theory," Part III, this volume.

20 In this respect, I am in agreement with David Norton's position in his *David Hume*.

21 Butler's arguments on this are found in the first, second, and third of his *Sermons at Rolls Chapel*, *Works*, I, 25–57.

22 One recalls here the definition of a virtue in Aquinas: "a good disposition of the mind, by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use" (*Summa Theologica*, 1a 2ae, 55, 4).

23 The two fundamental essays on this theme are Robert Paul Wolff, "Hume's Theory of Mental Activity", *Philosophical Review* 69 (1960): 289–310; and Fred Wilson, "Hume's Theory of Mental Activity," in *McGill Hume Studies*, pp. 101–20.

24 On this complicated topic, see the essay by John Biro in this volume; Nelson Pike, "Hume's Bundle Theory of the Self: A Limited Defense," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 4 (1967): 159–65; and my "Hume's Theory of the Self Revisited," *Dialogue* 14 (1975): 389–409.

25 For a classic discussion of this notion, see R. M. Chisholm, "Freedom and Action," in *Freedom and Determinism*, ed. Keith Lehrer (New York, 1966), pp. 11–44.
26 It is given its due place in Baier's *A Progess of Sentiments*, especially chap. 7.
27 *A Progress of Sentiments*, p. 136.