PLEASURE AS THE STANDARD OF VIRTUE IN HUME'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY[1]

BY

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Abstract: David Hume provides several accounts of moral virtue, all of which tie virtue to the experience of pleasure in the spectator. Hume believed that the appropriate pleasure for determinations of virtue was pleasure corrected by "the general point of view." I argue that common ways of spelling this out leave the account open to the charge that it cannot account adequately for mistaken judgments of virtue. I argue that we need to see Hume as offering both a metaphysics and an epistemology of virtue, and that Hume's account of virtue can adequately account for mistakes if he is understood as offering a definition of virtue tied to pleasure, but pleasure understood externally.

But in many orders of beauty, particularly those of the finer arts, it is requisite to employ much reasoning, in order to feel the proper sentiment; and a false relish may frequently be corrected by argument and reflection. There are just grounds to conclude, that moral beauty partakes much of this latter species, and demands the assistance of our intellectual faculties, in order to give it a suitable influence on the human mind (EPM, 173).[2]

David Hume provides several distinct definitions of moral virtue: (V1) "... *whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation*" (EPM, 289). And, (V2) "... virtue ... is *a quality of the mind agreeable to or approved of by every one, who considers or contemplates it*" (EPM, 261n) Even more simply, (V3) "... Every quality of the mind is denominated virtuous, which gives pleasure by the mere survey; as every quality, which produces pain, is called vicious" (T, 591). All of these claims tie virtue to the experience of pleasure in the spectator, thus leading to a potential problem for Hume's account of moral virtue: how,

on this account, is it possible to be mistaken about a trait's status as a virtue? While Hume provides a standard based on the general point of view which can account for a variety of mistakes, the general point of view has difficulty accounting for mistakes that sensible people, in general, might make due to lack of relevant information. This paper presents an account which tries to reconcile Hume's pleasure standard for moral virtue with his acknowledgment that such mistakes are possible. But first, the general account.

Given simply (V1) and (V3) it looks as though Hume has a problem allowing for the possibility that people make mistakes about virtue. A person cannot be mistaken about what he or she happens to find pleasing.

Given simply (V2), it's amazing that anyone ever gets it right, since a trait's quality as a virtue depends upon *everyone* finding it pleasing or agreeable. Even the paradigm moral virtue of generosity would fail this test; certainly Scrooge seemed to find it distasteful.

Fortunately, Hume gives us much more than these claims or "definitions." The standard line is to point to "the general point of view" as a way of avoiding hyper-subjectivity. Thus, it is what is pleasing from the general point of view that counts. However, this strategy will have it's own problems, to be explored in the first section of this paper. One goal of this paper is to show that Hume's account of moral virtue has the resources to provide an explanation of mistakes, – even mistakes at the level of "the general point of view." The key is to understand how Hume might put constraints on the sorts of pleasure that count as responses to virtue. For example, given his views on the double relation of impressions and ideas, pleasure has a double role in understanding Hume's account of virtue – there is the initial pleasure of the spectator, and then the pleasure associated with approval – e.g. which can be translated to pride or love depending on how the spectator views a connection with what she is observing.[3] Since the initial pleasure is clearly corrected on Hume's account, we have evidence that for genuine approval to take place we are talking about corrected pleasure. The additional suggestion that I would like to make is that the account of proper approval of a trait will depend on offering an account of pleasure which is externalist. I believe that this offers the best way of making everything Hume writes about pleasure and virtue consistent. But my project involves more that that – I'd like to suggest a way of understanding moral virtue which embraces a sentimentalist understanding of virtue, while at the same time putting some constraints on what is to count as a pleasure response which indicates genuine virtue.

I.   Can we be mistaken?

If it is accepted that we do make mistakes about virtue, then Hume's account must accommodate this. While there are passages in which he

indicates that we are infallible judges, that we could not be mistaken, there are also passages which clearly support the view that we could be mistaken.[4] For example, there is plenty of textual evidence in Hume to the effect that he held the view that not just *any* pleasurable or painful response justifies a judgement of virtue and vice. My enemy's courage is painful to contemplate, yet still a virtue. So, for Hume as well as common sense, we can have false or non-genuine responses. But note that this case doesn't involve making a mistake – even the person with such a false sense of pain is not necessarily making a mistake in judgment because he will still realize that his enemy's courage is a virtue. But this case shows that from the mere fact that one experiences pain at the sight or description of a mental quality, it does not follow that one is in the presence of vice; likewise, the mere experience of pleasure at the sight of behavior indicative of a certain mental quality does not establish that one is in the presence of virtue. So, how *can* we make mistakes? Clearly we can, for Hume, because he also notes that the so-called 'monkish' virtues are not in fact virtues. He famously writes:

> . . . as every quality, which is useful or agreeable to ourselves or others, is, in common life, allowed to be a part of personal merit; so no other will ever be received, where men judge of things by their natural, unprejudiced reason, without the delusive glosses of superstition and false religion. Celibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, silence, solitude, and the whole train of monkish virtues; for what reason are they everywhere rejected by men of sense, but because they serve no manner of purpose (EPM, 270).

Though *someone* must have found the monkish virtues pleasing, they do not in truth meet with our considered approval since, he later writes, "A gloomy, hair-brained enthusiast, after his death, may have a place in the calendar; but will scarcely ever be admitted, when alive, into intimacy and society, except by those who are as delirious and dismal as himself." The standard of virtue, then, must contain some requirement that the spectator regard the trait, and reflect on it in an unprejudiced and reasonable way – that is, she must reflect on it in a way not corrupted by artificial lives and manners which are the result of superstition or "extravagant philosophy."[5] The spectator does not allow his particular interests to shape his feelings upon viewing the mental quality in question. From the general point of view, then, not from my particular point of view, celibacy, fasting, and penance don't constitute moral virtues because from the general point of view they are not pleasing. Thus, the pleasurable/painful response must be corrected by the general point of view. It is for this reason that the pleasures of the hair-brained enthusiast don't count. It is also for this reason that a reasonable person, though he experiences pain at the sight of his enemy valiantly fighting, realizes nevertheless that this is courage and a virtue since, abstracted from a consideration of his own particular interests, it is a pleasing quality. However, though this may

rule out mistakes due to bias, prejudice, superstition, and the like, it does not seem to rule out mistakes that sensible people in general make because they lack relevant information, for example, about the trait's social utility.

What is "the general point of view"? In Hume's philosophical writings there is frequent mention of considering things "in general" – general rules and principles exert great power over our thinking. This is true in morals as in anything else. When we consider whether a trait is a virtue or not we must consider it in general, and this means basically two things for Hume: (1) we consider traits in general when we consider the benefits of the trait in question – general benefits render the trait a virtue. Thus, for Hume, virtue in rags is still virtue. Even if, in a particular instance, the good motive that determines virtue is not good producing, we still know that generally this trait is, and that qualifies it for virtue. However, the general point of view refers to yet another way we consider traits in general: (2) we consider the traits in general when we evaluate them from the general point of view, and "the general point of view" refers to a steady, fixed perspective from which people can make consistent moral judgments. With respect to (2) Hume writes:

In order, therefore, to prevent those continual contradictions, and arrive at a more stable judgment of things, we fix on some steady and general points of view; and always, in our thoughts, place ourselves in them, whatever may be our present situation (T, 591).

By reflection from the general point of view we correct how things initially appear to us. In some respects the general point of view is particularistic – that is, we put ourselves into the position of those affected by the trait to determine its virtue status. This is supposed to eliminate biases, and distortions of perspective. But note caution is in order here, since Hume doesn't have in mind a switch from one biased perspective to another. Once we imagine ourselves "closer" to the agent, we still need to consider the trait in general. There needs to be some common accessible standard for making moral judgments so that we may "prevent those continual contradictions."[6] We need such a standard to avoid contradiction and miscommunication. However, this raises the issue of what counts as general for Hume in this context. Is the general point of view the point of view which people in general have – so that, for example, if I need to decide whether or not x is a virtue, or if I want to decide how much of a virtue x is, then I ask myself what do people in general think about it? The danger here of course is that people in general could be mistaken. People in general might believe that chastity in women is an indispensable virtue, and yet be mistaken about that. If the standard of virtue is what people in general think, then this would not be possible. And, Hume seemed to believe that this was possible:

. . . wherever disputes arise . . . concerning the bounds of duty, the question cannot . . . be decided with greater certainty, than by ascertaining, on any side, the true interests of mankind. If any false opinion, embraced from appearances, has been found to prevail; as soon as farther experience and sounder reasoning have given us juster notions of human affairs; we retract our first sentiment, and adjust anew the boundaries of moral good and evil (EPM, 180).

This, considered along with the passages on the monkish virtues, seem to indicate that Hume felt that it would be *possible* for people *in general* to be mistaken about moral virtue. They might be mistaken because they are biased or prejudiced in some way, or they might be mistaken because they fail to see the long-range benefit of a trait, or all of its good (or bad) effects. One could try to account for this by holding that when we employ the general point of view we don't consider what people in general think, but rather what *sensible* people in general think. This has two problems. If the general point of view is supposed to *correct for* biases and pre-judices it won't be doing that if the biases and prejudices are simply ruled out of the description. Also, it doesn't fully solve the problem of making mistakes. Perfectly sensible people might be mistaken because they fail to see the long-term utility of a trait. Perhaps a trait produces social utility through some very complicated invisible hand process, which even a sensible person couldn't be expected to pick up on. Hume, as the above passage indicates, seems to believe such mistakes are possible, and this poses a problem because if the standard of virtue is whatever quality of the mind is deemed pleasurable by sensible people on the general survey, this would not be possible. So, one can see how writers have been pushed to interpret Hume as an ideal observer theorist – offering an ideal observer standard for virtue.[7] This would seem to solve the problem. The general point of view is an ideal observer point of view – the point of view of someone who is not only free of bias and prejudice, but who also has full information about the usefulness of a given trait. It's clear how we can make mistakes, and how sensible people can make mistakes, because even sensible people lack full information.

This interpretation of Hume has come under attack recently. Geoffrey Sayre-McCord has argued that an ideal observer standard violates one of the major rationales for the general point of view – that it provide a com-mon standard by which people make moral evaluations, so as to avoid contradicting each other.[8] He argues that the general point of view must be accessible to accomplish this end, and an ideal observer standard simply isn't accessible. People may be able to abstract from their particular interests if they try really hard, but nobody has full information. The ideal observer standard is impossibly high. Sayre-McCord seems to resolve the mistakes problem – which is cast in his paper as a concern that the account not collapse into relativism – by noting that Hume believed

that we possessed a homogenous nature upon which to base these judgements:

As long as the distinctions are drawn in the same way, thanks to the workings of our shared capacity for sympathy, what differences there are in the strengths of the sentiments felt will not affect the judgments we make. Although one person, for instance, might feel a stronger sentiment of approbation toward benevolence than does another, they will both approve of benevolence over indifference over malice. And it is this common verdict, induced by the general point of view, that will serve as the standard for our judgments.[9]

Sayre-McCord is quite right that it is from this point of view – which must be accessible – that we are justified in making moral judgments to the effect that benevolence is a virtue, and benevolence is better than indifference. But this doesn't speak to the same mistakes issue that concerns me here, and doesn't fully respond, therefore, to the threat of relativism. It would seem to render mistakes merely a form of pathology, of having an abnormal psychology.[10] This strategy, therefore, doesn't address the issue of mistakes that are based on a miscalculation – a reasonable miscalculation – of social benefit.

However, Sayre-McCord goes on to discuss Hume's case of the malicious beings who adopt a standard radically different from that offered by the general point of view. These creatures disapprove of the virtues (as Scrooge can be imagined to have disapproved of generosity). This spiteful point of view could even be justified on the basis of providing consistency in judgement. However, how can it be criticized as a standard of virtue? Is there nothing that can be said? Sayre-McCord argues that the way to decide between the general point of view and the spiteful standard is to cite the fact that adopting the general point of view is more beneficial – it leads to actual goods in a way that the spiteful standard cannot. Though it is in the realm of possibility that the spiteful standard might be to the benefit of such creatures, and those affected, "More likely, though, would be the discovery that their standard deserves our condemnation precisely because it's adoption by them would tend to undermine the welfare of those affected."[11] Thus, the general point of view, which is not an ideal observer point of view, is to be preferred to other standards because it is more beneficial. This would seem to indicate that the fact that it is more beneficial is what makes it the correct standard to adopt – and that it is *actual* benefit which the account of moral virtue will advocate that we be sensitive to. Again, however, it is still not clear that the *general* point of view can avoid the mistakes problem since, in general, people could still be mistaken about what is, in general, beneficial.[12]

Thus, we still seem to have a problem. Either Hume seems to be denying that we can make mistakes about virtue due to reasonable ignorance, which seems quite implausible and even seems to conflict with some of his

own views on virtue, or he seems to be presenting an account of virtue which sets an impossibly high standard for the evaluator – and would seem to defeat his stated goal of offering a common standard.

II.   The metaphysics and the epistemology of virtue

One potential way to deal with the problem would be to note that when one views a trait, but in some kind of distorted way – either because of bias or lack of full information – though one may feel pleasure on viewing the trait it is not true moral approval. Rather, it is some kind of pleasure we can confuse with moral approval. Hume notes (T, 472): "Nor is every sentiment of pleasure or pain, which arises from characters and actions, of that *peculiar* kind, which makes us praise or condemn." Note, however, that in this passage Hume is discussing correcting for bias by employing the general point of view. Pursuing an analogy with the musical he writes in the same passage:

> In like manner, tho' 'tis certain a musical voice is nothing but one that naturally gives a *particular* kind of pleasure; yet 'tis difficult for a man to be sensible, that the voice of an enemy is agreeable, or to allow it to be musical. But a person of a fine ear, who has the command of himself, can separate these feelings, and give praise to what deserves it (T, 472).

This passage reinforces the view that what Hume is talking about here is the judgment of the sensible person with the "correct ear". By analogy with moral judgment, a sensible person can also correct for biases. But my point all along has been that this does not go far enough, and in itself is not compatible with other passages in which he seems to note that we do make mistakes, and even sensible people can make mistakes, due to lack of full information.[13] Thus, the account I will offer is an attempt to reconcile seeming conflicts in what Hume writes on this subject.

I believe the way to handle the problem is to note that Hume may indeed be offering an account of moral virtue in two quite distinct ways – he is engaged in providing a metaphysics of virtue, and perhaps a semantics, when he seeks to give an account of what virtues are, and what the term 'virtue' means; and an epistemology of virtue, which answers the question of how we know or identify virtue.[14] First, regarding metaphysics and semantics, as (V1)–(V3), and numerous other passages, suggest, he wants to provide a *definition* of moral virtue. Secondly, regarding the epistemology issue, as the above passages indicate, and as commentators like Sayre-McCord note, he wants to give an account of moral judgement, providing a standard for reasonable or justified moral evaluation. These are two entirely distinct enterprises. I believe that they have been conflated, and thus the disagreement in the literature on what exactly

Hume is doing in providing a standard for virtue. If he is read as defining virtue by making reference to the general point of view, then the ideal observer interpretation seems the best because it gives us a nice account of mistakes. If he is read as providing an account of how one goes about making a justified judgment of moral virtue, then the ideal observer standard doesn't seem reasonable at all since it can't hope to provide the common standpoint. However, if we make the distinction between definition and standard of judgement, the problem is eliminated. What actually *makes* a trait a virtue is that it – generally speaking – leads to various goods (agreeableness and social utility more narrowly defined).[15] To the extent that the agent perceives this, the agent feels pleasure. Of course, only an agent who correctly perceives the benefits of the trait will feel such pleasure. Failure to perceive doesn't make the trait a non-virtue. So, it is possible on this account that there may well be unrecognized virtues and vices. What makes a *judgment* of virtue reasonable or justified is that – from the general survey, abstracted from our own particular interests – one can reasonably judge that this trait is beneficial and agreeable. And that's all the general point of view is. It is the point of view one adopts which makes no reference to your *particular* interests or perspective. It can be adopted by persons in China to evaluate those in Ancient Greece. Pleasure is crucial, still, to the account. Hume's view of human nature is such that were we to recognize the good effects of a trait, we would get pleasure.

This raises the issue, though, of why Hume defines virtue in terms of pleasure in the first place. Why not just say there are two kinds of virtue, one which is determined by pleasurable response, and the other type determined by tendency to more narrowly understood social utility?

But this would be to deny the basis for moral distinctions which is crucial to the overall account of moral virtue. The capacity for pleasure must be there for the moral evaluation to take place. Beings with no sympathetic response to others, who were incapable of feeling pleasure – such beings cannot make moral judgements. Further, if these were the only beings who existed, there would be no moral virtue. The appeal to pleasure is crucial to the definition as well as the account of moral judgment.

If the maneuver of distinguishing a metaphysics from an epistemology of virtue is accepted, then it looks like we might be stuck with an ideal observer standard for *defining* virtue. However, I'd like to suggest another way to understand Hume's definition which could well by-pass the ideal observer. Why is this desirable? The Ideal Observer is not discussed by Hume, and is instead extrapolated as a way to deal with this sort of problem for his account. This isn't a terrible problem, though, especially if one resigns oneself, as I do, to trying simply to give a Humean account of virtue. Instead, more seriously, the Ideal Observer standard suffers from a potential Euthyphro problem. Is x a virtue simply because the ideal

observer approves of it, or does the ideal observer approve of x because x is a virtue? As with the original Euthyphro problem for divine command theory, the first option makes the account seem capricious, whereas the second option renders the ideal observer superfluous since we are committed to there being some standard for virtue independent of the ideal observer himself. I believe that Hume would opt for the second in that there is an independent standard. The ideal observer heuristic is just a dramatic way of highlighting this.

So, what is the alternative? Hume defines moral virtue in terms of pleasurable responses, and it is the subjectivity of these responses which caused the initial difficulty in understanding his account. However, as the case the courageous enemy and as the monkish virtues show he does provide some constraint on what pleasures count. Further, he acknowledges in the generosity passage that people could be mistaken – even people in general could be mistaken – about a trait's status as a virtue. Thus, a way of solving this problem without appealing to an ideal observer standard is in order.

III.   The solution: an externalist account of pleasure

The solution to the mistakes problem is to focus on what Hume means – or perhaps, more plausibly, what Hume *could* mean by pleasure. Given what Hume says about constraints placed on the relevant sort of pleasure for virtue, I believe that he would be open to externalist account of pleasure which has the potential for solving these difficulties. The advantages are that this account would obviate the need for postulating an ideal observer – an ideal observer's perceptions are simply a dramatic way of making the point that pleasure is subject to defeasibility conditions and is not *purely* subjective. Some may resist this account, and I will do my best to motivate it, but if it is resisted as an account of pleasure per se, then I believe it can still be used as an account of "proper" or "genuine" pleasure.

Consider an analogy with seeing. If someone uttered "I saw a ghost," in one sense of 'saw' just having a ghostly experience entitled one to make that utterance – it's true. But in another sense it is not true because there is an external constraint. One cannot see what isn't there.[16] Such accounts have also been offered with regard to other subjective states.[17] Consider the following example – suppose that one were at a party and reached for what one believed to be a glass of lemonade, not realizing it was poisoned. A spectator might reasonably remonstrate by saying: "Stop, you don't really want to drink that!" If I drink the poisoned lemonade it still tastes sweet, and I still like the taste, but it isn't a genuinely pleasurable experience for me because I wouldn't like it if I knew. Of course there's a

sense in which I have the experience of a raw good feeling, that's not being denied. Similarly, I have that sensation when I see the clumsiness or cowardice of my enemy. But I wouldn't feel the pleasure if I considered the trait generally, because this trait is not good-producing, or conducive to social benefit. Thus, the response is defeated as genuine or true.[18] The pleasures of children are often discounted along these lines. My toddler derives pleasure from pulling his older brother's hair. Yet, again, it is tempting to say he isn't really getting pleasure from this activity because he is (I hope!) misperceiving the effects, and not sensitive to the pain caused by the activity, and that if he was aware of what he was doing, then he would be distressed. Consider yet another example, that of an actor who collapses and dies onstage. The audience witnessing this may feel a pleasure inasmuch as they falsely believe that he is still acting, that the collapse was part of the performance. It is plausible to suppose, however, that after they realize that he is dead, they would deny that they had experienced true pleasure.[19] Yet, if one were able to look inside their brains, one would have plenty of internal physical evidence of pleasurable sensations – endorphins, etc. The feeling is indistinguishable from true pleasure in the sense that the mental states are indistinguishable (just as true belief and false belief are similarly indistinguishable). In terms of what I can learn by introspection and attention to the phenomenology of the experience – the sensations are the same. Yet, on the externalist account an external condition has to be met in order for the sensation to qualify as genuine. So, to know if someone is feeling true pleasure one must look outside of the agent's mind. We might then hold the claim that "pleasure" is "pleasure in" something, or "pleasure" is "pleasure that" something, and to be genuine or true the pleasure's object must reflect reality.[20] The approval pleasure must be genuine for the trait to be a virtue.

There are a variety of ways one could go about spelling out an externalist account of pleasure. For example, one could deny that the sensation one might confuse for pleasure, but which fails to meet the external condition, is a pleasure at all. In this way a person might confuse lust for love, for example. However, the view that I'm arguing for grants that the positive feeling is pleasure but holds that pleasure can be appropriate or inappropriate (or "true" or "false") under certain circumstances. When we experience pleasure we experience pleasure in something, or pleasure that something is the case, or the pleasure we experience depends upon our taking something to be the case. When the basis for the pleasure or the object of the pleasure is shown not to obtain, then the pleasure is repudiated. So, a pleasure is inappropriate if it exhibits a false representation (if I take pleasure in or pleasure that x when x in fact does not obtain), or it is based on a false belief of the relevant sort. The pleasure is one that either is repudiated or would be repudiated if the experiencing agent were aware of the facts. I opt for this alternative because it is more faithful to

Hume's view that pleasure is like a simple positive sensation, or tingle.[21] On Hume's particular account, for me to be justified in viewing the pleasure as genuine, it must pass the test from the general point of view. For the trait to actually be a virtue it must be the case that there would be pleasure when the trait is viewed from the general point of view and when the relevant information is known. Thus, generosity which actually leads to social problems on balance may not be a moral virtue, even though we may all be justified in regarding it as a moral virtue.

The pleasure I experience when my enemy is vain or stupid is inappropriate in making judgements of virtue, because, as far as it is relevant to virtue it will not withstand reflection. It will not produce pleasure on the general survey, and a reasonable agent will not endorse it from that point of view. This procedure is relevant to the making of a justified moral judgment. For a trait to satisfy the conditions of social virtue, however, it must do more than withstand this sort of scrutiny – the second order pleasure must also be veridical. Further, the pleasure is something that is conditional: what is relevant is that pleasure would be felt on the general survey, and the pleasure, again, must satisfy the external conditions of virtue set out by Hume. In the case of what he call's the social virtues – the virtues of generosity and justice and chastity – a good case can be made that the external conditions he specifies are those of actual social utility.[22]

There are, of course, a variety of objections one might try to run against this analysis. First of all, it's probably not uncommon at all for people to try to keep others happy by hiding things from them. For example, Bobby might want to hide his pet python from his mother, because he wants to keep her happy. Bobby's mother is therefore living in blissful ignorance – ignorant of the fact that her son owns a deadly snake which is concealed in his room. If she were to know this she would be horrified. Yet, it seems quite counterintuitive to say of Bobby's mom that she is not *really* happy. But this intuition, I believe, doesn't bear scrutiny – would we call a woman truly happy if her positive internal states depended upon the false view that her husband was loyal and devoted?

Also, I believe that some of the counter intuitions can be handled by considering the fact that we sometimes we use one word for both part and whole. For example, when my son rinses himself after his bath he often just rinses his head, so then I've got to say "rinse your body!" 'Body' here refers to the rest of his body. 'Body' may also be used to refer to the entire body, and not just a part. Maybe 'pleasure' works the same way – sometimes picking out the purely attitudinal end of the experience, and sometimes the whole bit. The little bit can sometimes be good enough, but generally people are interested, or care about, the whole bit. Thus the preference for veridical pleasures – ones which satisfy the external condition. This maneuver would be open to Hume because – even if he can be

described as only doing moral psychology – he is trying to get clear on what people care about because this is what will either generate pleasure or be indicated by the experience of pleasure. And, what they care about in the case of the social virtues is that there be an actual production of social benefit – indeed, for the artificial virtues, that is all that they care about. Thus, failure to satisfy the external conditions would be something that ought to disturb the average person.

This strategy runs up against the typical characterization of Hume as offering a purely internalist view of pleasures and pains: pleasures and pains are each a category of impression, among other sense impressions.[23] The idea is that a purely internalist account tends to identify pleasure as a homogenous internal sensation – a positive feeling tone is pleasure, though there may be differences of course in terms of intensity, or object.[24] However, the account I propose doesn't need to question this, in that it will not deny that a feeling is characteristic of an actual experience of pleasure; but genuine pleasure requires more in that there are conditions that can "defeat" the initial sensation's status as pleasure at the level of approval. While Hume did famously maintain that passions are not truth-evaluable, or, strictly speaking, reasonable – immediately after making this claim he does a good deal to qualify it by noting that we do often speak of passions as unreasonable – if, for example, they are based on false belief or faulty reasoning.[25] One might also want to add to this a qualification about appropriate *degree* of feeling, since one might think certain emotional responses to be unreasonable if they are out of proportion (though Hume doesn't explicitly discuss this in the passage where he mentions unreasonable passions, presumably this problem would be handled by correcting sentiment from the general point of view).[26] And Hume, while maintaining that only an internal sense of sympathy could be the source of moral distinctions, also held that reason could influence how we felt by discovering matters of fact. Thus, the internal sense is the source of my ability to even make judgements of good and evil, quite true, but how I go about making these judgements will be rightly influenced by what reason shows me to be the case – facts having to do, in many cases, with the benefits of the trait in question. From this we note that in giving an account of what the virtues are, that account must be sensitive to these objective considerations.[27] Further, in discussing taste in OST he writes:

. . . when any work is addressed to the public, though I should have a friendship or enmity with the author, I must depart from this situation; and considering myself as a man in general, forget, if possible, my individual being and my peculiar circumstances. A person influenced by prejudice complies not with this condition; but obstinately maintains his natural position, without placing himself in that point of view. . . . By this means, his sentiments are perverted. . . . So far his taste evidently departs from the true standard; and of consequence loses all credit and authority.

It is well known, that in all questions, submitted to the understanding, prejudice is destructive of sound judgment, and perverts all operations of the intellectual faculties . . . It belongs to good sense to check its influence in both cases; and in this respect, as well as in many others, reason, if not an essential part of taste, is at least requisite to the operations of this latter faculty (OST, 277).

Of course, here he is discussing how men of sense make the appropriate corrections – and this reminds one of some of the things he says about the general point of view elsewhere. However, later in the same essay he makes the metaphysics/epistemology distinction by nothing that, though it may be hard to identify true taste, or true aesthetic expertise, it does exist. Thus, judgment and objective fact are separated. I would like to point to a similar separation with respect to moral virtue, but which retains an essential connection between moral virtue and pleasurable response. And – this will, I believe, lead us to find more plausible the view suggested here – that in giving an account of what a virtue is, Hume means to include the actual, general, benefits of the trait as crucial. So, if a trait – unbeknownst to us – leads to horrible consequences, it is not a moral virtue, though it is still possible that we may be justified in believing it a moral virtue, in making that moral judgement that this trait is a virtue.[28]

But what of pain? Surely – even if some of the above examples kind of motivate an externalist view of pleasure, this will not work for pain. Suppose that I think I stub my toe and I feel pain, but it turns out that I'm mistaken. Well, I may well be mistaken about the circumstances, but one thing I can't be mistaken about here is whether or not I'm truly feeling pain. However, the paradigm cases that motivate this intuition seem to involve experiences of physical pain. Along the lines I suggest, it may be better to think of what Hume had in mind here not so much as experiencing this sort of pain, but rather, as experiencing something unpleasant, in which case these cases don't constitute the paradigm. It doesn't seem contradictory to say to Connie that what she thinks is an unpleasant experience isn't really – she just thinks it's unpleasant because she makes a misattribution of some effect. For example, to lift a case from Adam Smith – perhaps from the general survey selfishness seems unpleasant, because from the general point of view people mistakenly believe it leads to disutility; on this view the sensation isn't a case of genuine unpleasantness, because if they were to see the beneficial effects, then it would be pleasing to contemplate the selfishness. Thus, the unpleasantness has defeasibility conditions as well, in the case of character trait's status as moral virtue, those conditions will be actual production of social utility, or actual pleasing quality considered in general.

Another seeming difficulty is that Hume frequently drew analogies between moral and aesthetic appreciation. Like our judgment of morals

and prudence and intelligence, aesthetic judgment is normative (unlike our judgment that the box is square, which also rests on adopting the proper perspective, but is not a normative judgement). Yet, of all these sorts of judgments, aesthetic ones seem the least objective – "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," etc. It seems that there can be no objective standard here, since taste varies so widely from person to person.

However, Hume does believe that such a standard exists, he is not advocating "anything goes." Recall his statement in "Of the Standard of Taste":

> Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between OGILBY and MILTON, or BUNYAN and ADDISON, would be thought to defend no less an extravagance, than if he had maintained a mole-hill to be as high as TENERIFFE, or a pond as extensive as the ocean. Though there may be found persons, who give the preference to the former authors; no one pays attention to such a taste; and we pronounce without scruple the sentiment of these pretended critics to be absurd and ridiculous (OST, 269).

In the same essay he notes – in a passage quoted earlier – that reason is a crucial tool in correcting for prejudices, writing – again – that good sense is crucial to correcting responses.[29]

This helps explain the discounting of forgeries, for example. Mark Sagoff notes a case described by Kant in which dinner guests are deceived into thinking that they are hearing bird songs when in fact a small boy has been sent out into the woods to fake the songs: "There is a suggestion in Kant's story that the object of aesthetic delight is not the sound *simpliciter* but the *sound of the nightingale* or, as it turns out, the *sound of a mischevious boy imitating the nightingale*. The suggestion, moreover, is that these are aesthetically quite different sounds, even though these can be mistaken for the other by someone who does not beat the bushes to find out which it is."[30] Thus, the sounds considered all by themselves are indistinguishable. Yet, their aesthetic quality can be distinguished, again, by virtue of meeting, or not, some other external condition on the experience. But one might try to use the forgery or fakery example against the account in the following way: true, for some people the forgery makes them discount the experience, but for others, one can imagine that it actually enhances the experience. So, in *Victor*, *Victoria* – some are amazed at the female impersonation; they thought they were seeing a woman, when in fact, so they believed, it was a man (though this was a mistake, they *were* really seeing a woman). They were even more impressed by the performance, even though the initial experience was based on a mistake. The way to handle this maneuver, however, is to point out the pleasures are actually quite distinct and different. What I'm taking pleasure in is the actor's skill, not the performance of someone I take, mistakenly, to be a man pretending to be a woman who is singing.

Therefore, on the more developed account of moral virtue offered here, a moral virtue is a quality of the mind that would be pleasing if the viewer knew the relevant facts pertaining to the generation of utility, and/or knew how, in general, people (or the right sort of people) were to react to the trait. Thus, there is a counterfactual test for moral virtue. A critic might point out at this point that, while I want to distinguish my account from the ideal observer account, this counterfactual seems to put me right back into the ideal observer camp. This, however, does not follow. First of all, it is important to note that there's nothing about ideal observer accounts which makes them necessarily counterfactual. One possible version of an ideal observer account might be offered by a Theist who believes that God does exist and God is the one who determines what counts as moral virtue because God has full information. Further, counterfactual tests don't commit one to an ideal observer. For example, when I say, "John is irritable" what I mean is that "If he were to be even mildly provoked, John would become angry." There's no appeal to an ideal observer, though it is quite true as well that were an ideal observer to view John under those conditions he would observe an angry John. But appeal to an ideal observer is a fifth wheel – unnecessary – though, as I said earlier in the paper it still can be used as a useful heuristic. By analogy, then, we are to view moral virtues as *pleasurable* mental qualities. Any normal person, under the right conditions, would get pleasure from these mental qualities. If we keep in mind the distinction made earlier in the paper, between the metaphysics and the epistemology of virtue, then we define virtue as what is pleasurable, though realize that we may not be justified in viewing a trait that in fact is a virtue as pleasurable if we are lacking the relevant information. It is important to note that this maneuver renders the account compatible also with standard views of Hume's philosophy of mind – it is true that in making a judgment of virtue what I have access to is the impression that the view of the character trait affords, and this in turn can be corrected to a better or worse degree, depending on how sensible I am. But this simply affects judgment. The metaphysic needn't be tied to the actual impression experienced except in the sense, to be discussed below, where in order for there to be moral virtues and vices there have to be individuals with the appropriate sorts of subjective mental states – who can participate in sympathetic engagement.

However, this analysis leaves open the issue of the emotional basis for our ability to make these distinctions and to impose certain standards of virtue and taste. One way of handling the issue of standards and their basis is to cite his reliance on a stable human nature; in the case of morals, as mentioned earlier, sympathy is a part of all of us; in the case of aesthetics, there is some appreciation or taste in all of us too. Note, however, that the analysis that I am suggesting does not deny this important element of Hume's philosophy. Without the natures we possess we would

not be making those distinctions that we call moral distinctions. This is quite true. It is this aspect of our nature which approves of social benefits, and it is this aspect of our human nature which disapproves social destruction. This is quite compatible with the observation, and in my view even demands, that the objective fact of social benefit influence a legitimate pleasure response in Hume's moral philosophy. Thus, this suggests a defeasibility condition for pleasure in Hume: for the virtues whose value is determined by social utility, it must be the case they are conducive to social utility in actual matter of fact, when considered in general (to handle the "virtue in rags" phenomenon). It is not enough that the benefit be imagined or anticipated. Just as the audience in the above situation doesn't really find the actor's collapse genuinely pleasing, or *pleasurable* – because if they knew he was dead they would be distressed, chastity isn't really *pleasurable* because if the social disutility were perceived and appreciated, it would be distressing. This account in no way rejects Hume's reliance on human nature as providing the foundation for moral distinctions, and it also does justice to that aspect of his account which recognizes the deliverances of reason as having a legitimate impact on judgement. If we are justified in changing our view of a trait given new facts, my interpretation simply claims that Hume can incorporate this into an account of the metaphysics of virtue by noting that those can affect the trait's actual virtue status.[31] Thus, the virtues are those qualities of the mind which are immediately agreeable and/or give rise to pleasure in the spectator, where that pleasure is subject to defeasibility conditions and is not understood as simply a simple pleasant impression.

So how do we go about specifying the defeasibility conditions? If the pleasure *rests on* a mistake then there is a *prima facie* case for it to be made that it is not genuine. However, there has to be some sort of relevance condition specified for the sorts of mistakes that are going to count. It seems plausible to maintain that if, for example, part of the reason why Bill is happy in his marriage is that he believes his wife loves him, then whether or not she does love him is relevant. If it turns out that she does not love him, then his pleasure has been non-genuine.[32] If the pleasure one takes in a virtue depends upon it's social utility, then should it prove to be the case that the social utility doesn't exist, then again the pleasure response is non-genuine. For *artificial* virtues like chastity, I feel that this is clearly the case in Hume.

But what of the natural virtues? Utility doesn't exhaustively explain their pleasing qualities, and, indeed, some are virtues simply because they are immediately agreeable – like wit and charm. Here there is still the appeal to something we have better access to, frankly, and I believe that there is less opportunity for mistake here. This leads to another problem that I can't find discussed in Hume, though maybe it is. How would and how should our judgment go in cases where there is immediate agreeableness,

but then realization that the trait hurts rather than helps people? It's hard to think of good examples, but possibly cleanliness is one, if it is true that asthma rates have risen due to excessive concerns over cleanliness, or resistance of bacteria to antibiotics. It would seem a possible solution, one compatible with much of what Hume says, would be to hold that the pleasure can be defeated by adverse conditions. If cleanliness generally leads to the negative outcome then it can't be regarded as a virtue, though we still are immediately pleased by it. It may be that Hume would hold that the recognition of the *general* bad effects would destroy the pleasure, unlike the case in which I still have pleasure at a *particular* imprudent act of generosity. But, as I've argued earlier, to remain faithful to Hume it is crucial that the pleasure be there for virtue to exist. A trait which leads to good but does not generate pleasure were that realized would not be a virtue.

Conclusion

It has been my claim in this paper that in defining virtue Hume makes use of "pleasure" as a defeasible sensation. This allows him to deal with the issue of mistakes without postulating an ideal observer. This in turn allows a resolution of an apparent inconsistency in Hume between the pleasure standard of moral virtue and the admission that even reasonable people in general can be mistaken about virtue.

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NOTES

[2] Unless otherwise noted, page references are to Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (T), L. A. Selby-Bigge (ed.) 2nd edition, and revised by P. H. Nidditch, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (EPM), in *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, L. A. Selby-Bigge (ed.) 3rd edition, and revised by P. H. Nidditch, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, and to "Of the Standard of Taste," (OST) in *David Hume: The Philosophical Works*, volume 3, by Thomas Hill Green and Thomas Hodge Grose (eds.) Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1964.

³ See James Baillie's discussion in Chapter 3 of *Hume on Morality*. Routledge: 2000.

⁴ An example of a passage in which he indicates that we can't be mistaken is the following:

> The distinction of moral good and evil is founded on the pleasure or pain, which results from the view of any sentiment, or character: and as that pleasure or pain cannot be unknown to the person who feels it, it follows, that there is just so much vice or virtue in any character, as every one places in it, and 'tis impossible in this particular we can ever be mistaken (T, 546–7).

However, I think a more natural interpretation of this passage is to hold that here Hume is talking about how we go about making the distinction between good and evil in general. That we can make such a distinction is due to sentiment, not reason, and it is a uniform sentiment among human beings. Again, this passage seems to overstate Hume's case, and like (V3) presents an implausible standard – I believe he would want to rule out the judgment of a Scrooge.

⁵ See "A Dialogue," printed in Selby-Bigge's 1975 edition of Hume's *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, pp. 341–3.

⁶ As Rachel Cohon indicates, though, it isn't clear that we couldn't communicate with each other merely because our assessments of virtue vary. See her (1997) "The Common Point of View in Hume's Ethics," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* December, pp. 827–50.

⁷ See, for example, John Rawls' (1971) *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971, pp. 185–8 and Jonathan Harrison's (1976) *Hume's Moral Epistemology*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976, p. 114, where Harrison argues that Hume can be read as moving toward an ideal observer standard.

⁸ Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (1994) "On Why Hume's 'General Point of View' Isn't Ideal – and Shouldn't Be," *Social Philosophy & Policy* Winter, pp. 202–28.

⁹ Ibid., p. 226.

¹⁰ Further, it isn't clear that an Ideal Observer standard is not accessible, in the sense that we wouldn't be able to actually employ some kind of idealization in trying to figure out what qualifies as virtue. Idealizations are frequently used in science, and people seem to be able to find them perfectly accessible, or workable. Frictionless planes don't actually exist, and I have no actual experience of them, yet generalizations regarding them seem perfectly understandable.

¹¹ Sayre-McCord, p. 227.

¹² Elizabeth Radcliffe offers an interpretation which shows that, in Hume, moral judgments are based on our motivating moral sentiments. This view that I offer is entirely compatible with *this*, since I hold that were it not for the moral sentiments, Hume would hold the judgement would not be made. On her view, both the moral judgment and the moral motivation derive from our own feelings. But the moral judgments we make don't directly track our feelings – and that's where the general point of view comes in [See her (1994) "Hume on Motivating Sentiments," *Hume Studies* April, pp. 37–58]. Where I part company is in how the general point of view is to be understood. On her view – which is presented in some opposition to an Ideal Observer interpretation – it is the feelings *we* would have in the general point of view which are relevant. So there is some correction, but this still doesn't allow for mistakes of the sort I am concerned with. In addition to the epistemological and motivational aspect of Hume's moral psychology, which Radcliffe focuses on, there is a metaphysics of virtue which influences our intuitions here, and which I will try to show is a separate, though connected, project. There is a fact of the matter as to whether x is a virtue. That depends on our capacity for sympathetic engagement, our caring about what happens to others, for example. But an account of proper moral judgment – reasonable moral judgment – simply has to do with specifying how we go about making

moral judgments in a way that best avoids distortion and error – but still recognizing that such may occur. I believe Hume to have been sensitive to this distinction.

¹³ The passage quoted earlier in the paper, from EPM 180, points to the fact that with additional information, additional empirical input, we can revise our judgments, which would indicate the earlier ones were wrong.

¹⁴ For the purpose of this paper, the metaphysics/semantics of virtue distinction isn't that significant. However, it opens up a lot of interesting possibilities: might Hume, with his 'definitions,' simply be offering an account of how we fix the reference for 'virtue'?

¹⁵ Annette Baier notes, and seems to approve, Hume's distinction between simple agreeableness and the tendency to social utility more narrowly construed. Bentham, inspired by Hume, isn't sensitive to this:

But Bentham blunts Hume's distinction between the useful and the agreeable, distorting the agreeable into cash utility. The kind of calculative thinking appropriate for judging what has greater utility is carried over into evaluation of the agreeable, in a way that Hume avoids. Bentham not merely extends the label "utility" to the whole of ethics the accountant's style of thinking which Hume invokes only for justice, that relatively dismal virtue whose value does lie much more squarely in utility, as Hume uses the word, than in any agreeability. It is *disagreeable* to take from the poor to get rich creditors paid, disagreeable, to humane people, to insist on penal statutes being inflexibly carried out (1991) *A Progress of Sentiments*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 204–5.

But I believe this is just a matter of labeling the good to be produced by the trait. Hume's contention is that we just like fun traits like wit, they are amusing, and a charming person is one who makes us feel good. Generosity and benevolence, again, are simply pleasing – and each instance is pleasing (again, considered from the general point of view), but the pleasing quality has a deeper explanation, and that is cashed out in terms of the narrow social utility. Because of our sympathetic natures, we find the social goods produced by generosity and kindness – redistribution of wealth to those in need, mitigation of human suffering, and so on – pleasing. And a kind, generous person is trying to achieve this sort of good, and that's what we are responding to. Nevertheless, this pleasure would evaporate if we were to detect an overall destructive tendency in these traits, and it wouldn't exist if they didn't produce good (empirically, this seems quite implausible). But the artificial virtues like justice and chastity are quite different. They are not agreeable from the general point of view, though they may be pleasing when considered in general. Thus, even from the general point of view taking from the poor to enrich the wealthy, is not agreeable; yet, considered in general, the system of justice is one which is pleasing because it is necessary to maintain a society in which people by and large benefit from just arrangements.

¹⁶ I thank Rachel Cohon for this example.

¹⁷ See Ruth Barcan Marcus' (1981) "A Proposed Solution to the Puzzle about Belief," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, pp. 501–10. There Marcus argues that one cannot believe the impossible, thus arguing that there is an external condition to be met for belief. She writes:

Suppose that someone were to claim that he believes Hesperus is not identical with Phosphorus . . . where in those contexts of use the names of the "pairs" in question do, on the theory of direct reference, refer to the same thing. It is my (non post-hoc) intuition that on *discovery* that those identities hold, and consequently that the associated name pairs name the same thing, I would *not* say that I had *changed* my belief or acquired a new belief to replace the old, but that I was mistaken in claiming that I *had* those beliefs to begin with (p. 505).

In this article Marcus makes a useful distinction between assent and belief. I may assent to a contradiction or impossibility, but not believe one.

¹⁸ It certainly seems odd to attribute truth or falsity or appropriateness or inappropriateness to pleasurable responses within Hume, however, there are passages where Hume seems

to use this way of speaking with respect to our responses to virtue. One passage is the passage from EPM quoted at the opening of the paper. Another passage has him distinguishing true and false wit – wit being one of those qualities which is immediately agreeable.

> . . . what is this *taste*, from which true and false wit in a manner receive their being, and without which no thought can have a title to either of these denominations? 'Tis plainly nothing but a sensation of pleasure from true wit, and of uneasiness from false, without our being able to tell the reasons of that pleasure or uneasiness. The power of bestowing these opposite sensations is, therefore, the very essence of true and false wit; and consequently the cause of that pride or humility, which arises from them (T, 297).

[19] Ann Bumpus pointed out to me that it is difficult on this analysis to explain the audience's distress. Of course, upon discovering the actor has died they will be distressed *at that* – but they will also be distressed and even ashamed at their feeling of pleasure at this supposed performance. But if there was no pleasure then why be distressed at the feeling? First, though, one is distressed at the *sensation* associated with the false belief – so this is not at all incompatible with the account. It is an interesting issue as to why one experiences the distress, but my guess is that it has to do with the new belief that, "while the actor was dying on stage, we were standing here clapping." The resemblance to callousness is striking, and – given Humean psychological principles, it isn't puzzling that people will feel ashamed given the "association". Indeed, this might even support the externalism in that it wouldn't seem out of order to say – given that they didn't know anything was wrong and there was no way for them to reasonably know – that they shouldn't feel ashamed because the pleasure was not true.

[20] There is a long tradition behind this sort of analysis. Of course, Plato's *Philebus* sets the stage, with an initial account of false pleasure. Irving Thalberg (1961) pursues this in his article "False Pleasures," *The Journal of Philosophy* Feb. Here Thalberg presents some considerations against the view, that one sees Hume present in Book II of the *Treatise*, that in these sorts of cases the belief and the pleasure are separable:

> Another intuitive test for the inseparability of Jones' pleasure from his belief would be to ask Jones to consider *just* his pleasure, having banished the belief from his mind. . . . he cannot be *delighted that he won* without believing that he won (p. 68).

However, there is a difference between being inseparable because the belief and the pleasure are conjoined, or the belief is a necessary condition to the pleasure of that sort, and being conceptually inseparable, as four-sidedness is inseparable from squareness. I believe it is entirely open to the Humean to hold that the belief is necessary for the pleasure. To use an example from Thalberg, it would be odd to hold that someone could really be pleased that they are smoking a cigarette, or pleased in smoking the cigarette, if they she didn't at least believe she was smoking a cigarette (p. 71). It is then an open question as to whether the falsity of the belief under certain circumstances defeats the pleasure. Further, there is plenty textual evidence to the effect that when Hume denied that the passions were truth-evaluable, he did not mean to deny them content. Otherwise, his account of motivation would be quite puzzling (see James Baillie's interesting discussion of this in *Hume on Morality* [Routledge, 2000, pp.]) While this is not something Hume is very clear on, I believe the account I propose is entirely compatible with his.

[21] I thank Rachel Cohon for pointing this out.

[22] I should point out that this externalism in no way commits one to a realist view of moral properties. The relevant external conditions are determined by what we care about – thus, there is still a contingency on human nature. One could argue a realist view, and that would be compatible with the externalist account offered here, but my account is not at all committed to it, and is quite compatible with the standard reading of Hume.

23 See, for example, L.W. Sumner (1996) *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*, Oxford: OUP, p. 88.

24 Another reason Hume might have resisted an externalist account of pleasure is that this account seemed to be popular amongst the Puritans – one of his main targets. To them, life is potentially filled with false pleasures, and one must resist their lure. However, Hume could just shift the point of disagreement with the Puritan. The Puritan is mistaken in his identification of the relevant defeasibility conditions. Instead, perhaps it is the Puritan's pleasure that is false. Also, however, Thalberg citing the *Philebus*, also notes that people often seem to confuse false pleasures with wicked ones:

Socrates: . . . the evil, no less than the good, have pleasures painted in their minds, but these pleasures, I imagine, are false.
Protarchus: Of course.
Socrates: Bad men, then, delight for the most part in false pleasures, good men in true ones [P 40 B/C, Hackforth translation, cited in Thalberg, p. 69]

Perhaps the best way to have approached the Puritans is to argue that they are really attributing wicked pleasures rather than false ones to those who delight in their sin – though, they probably thought that if one knew what was in store for the unrepentant, then the pleasure would vanish! So – they are both wicked and false.

25 Although not crucial to the externalism proposed in this account, one should note a distinction between unreasonable and false pleasure is possible – analogous to the distinction between unreasonable and false belief. A pleasure based on a false belief in a false pleasure, one based on an unreasonable belief may be unreasonable, or the case of *excessive* pleasure or displeasure may count as, not false, but still unreasonable in virtue of being excessive.

26 Terence Penelhum (1964), in his article, "Pleasure and Falsity," *American Philosophical Quarterly* April, pp. 81–91 argues that a pleasure, or an emotion, may be said to be in error when it is based on a false belief or when it's degree is inappropriate. In the later case he writes: "It might be that I am right in judging that my neighbor's unwillingness to prevent his dog from running on my lawn is due to his irresponsibility, but that my anger is disproportionately great" (p. 83). This is evidence, he believes, that we do judge emotions by appraising them in terms of their objects. In this case the object isn't serious enough to warrant extreme anger.

27 The view I am advocating is in partial disagreement with a prevailing view, presented in Pall Ardal's (1966) excellent work *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise*, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1966:

. . . it is important to see that it is not the actual relation between subject and object which is relevant, but rather what the object *thinks* is his relation to the subject. . . . Thus he may be proud of the exploits of a person he believes to be his son and to have achieved some important feat, although it may turn out later that he was mistaken in both beliefs. In such a case, one might say with pity 'And he was so proud of the fellow'. One would not say he thought he was proud of the person he believed to be his son. . . . (p. 28).

This does seem quite inconclusive, however. One quite naturally can say things like "I thought I loved him, but I was wrong," or "I was believed that I was proud of him, but it turned out that I was mistaken." The expressions both have an external dimension, or can be used that way – the issue is to decide which way Hume should go.

28 Hume's own case of chastity – or the differential virtue of chastity in women – might be an example of this. It is possible that people in general viewed it as necessary for society, but also that they were making a mistake in this assessment of fact upon which their pleasure response is based.

29 OST, p. 277.

[30] Mark Sagoff (1983), "The Aesthetic Status of Forgeries," in Denis Dutton (ed.) *The Forger's Art*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 141.

[31] On a superficial reading Hume seems to be offering an internalist account of virtue itself when he writes that it is the motive we are really evaluating when we make moral evaluations, and external factors are simply evidence for what a person's motive may be. However, if we look at his account of what makes motives virtuous ones, the explanation is in terms of their generating pleasure, either by being immediately agreeable, or by pleasing by a consideration of their social benefits. My claim is that a simple impression is not sufficient for a correct virtue judgment, nor for conferring actual virtue status on a trait. The trait needs to generate social benefit or be immediately agreeable, which is another form of external good. Thus, I believe one could make a case for Hume's account being externalist, though this is a project beyond the scope of this paper. See *Uneasy Virtue*, chapters 4 and 5, for more on this distinction.

[32] I thank Ted Sider for this example.