Veronika Teryngerová and Hans Rainer Sepp (eds.)
Ethics in Politics?

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Table of Contents

Introduction 7

Helmer Stoel (Padova)
Altering Perspective:
Hume on Moral Judgement 11

Milan Hanyš (Prague)
Dissent and Civil Disobedience:
An Arendtian Perspective 39

Judith Wagner (Linz)
Escape from the Aporia of Action or Erratic Entity:
Hannah Arendt vs. Paul Ricoeur
on the Concept of Political Forgiveness 49

Veronika Teryngerová (Prague)
Compelling Questions Linked to the Use of Satire
in Chinese Literature of the 20th Century 67

Luther Aquino (Louvain-la-Neuve)
Pasyon, Reason and Freedom
Sketches for an Agonistic Rethinking
of Philippine Democracy 83

About the Authors 111

Introduction

This volume is a collection of texts written by young researchers and students of the Faculty of Humanities at Charles University in Prague. The individual chapters deal with the broad field of vagueness that lies between the rather distinct conceptions of morality and ethics on the one side, and the unforeseeable political and societal reality on the other. They explore the possibilities and limits of politics, as well as the negotiation of hierarchy in genre discussions, both of which are influenced by modes of ethical understanding in light of certain aspects in modern philosophies and intercultural facts. In this way, they analyze the ethical efficacy and political or cultural relevance of such manifold phenomena as perspectivism in moral judgements, civil disobedience, political forgiveness, the function of societal satire, and modes of reason in relation to different grammars of liberation. They also refer to such thinkers as David Hume, Hannah Arendt, Paul Ricoeur and Chantal Mouffe.

The first article "Altering Perspective: Hume on Moral Judgement" by *Helmer Stoel* opens the discussion with the remark that Hume's moral and political thought seems to contain a central paradox. Where on the one hand, he warns against the dangers of self-interestedness, on the other he sees it as a source for justice and morality. This article argues that, for Hume, moral judgement is above all a *matter of perspective*. As a morally neutral passion, self-interestedness can work for both virtue and vice. According to Hume, the direction that it takes depends on the capacity of moral judgement to reach an impartial point of view, a process that depends on a complex interaction between the passions, the imagination, and 'sympathy'. Both virtuous action and the operation of justice presuppose an alteration of perspective. By reconstructing Hume's account of moral judgement in this manner, and by connecting his radical sentimentalism to his political theory, the question of perspective reveals itself as one of the pivotal problems of his thought.

In his article "Dissent and Civil Disobedience: An Arendtian Perspective" *Milan Hanyš* focuses on the place of dissent and especially of civil disobedience in the political thought of Hannah Arendt. His piece argues that civil disobedience is not a moral phenomenon, but a special case of political action in an Arendtian sense. Civil disobedience is neither identical to an act of conscientious objection, nor must a disobedient be willing to accept punishment. Whereas conscientious objection is the act of an individual based in his private moral conviction and is motivated by care for the individual soul or purity of conscience, civil disobedience is on the other hand the action of a group motivated by care for the shared world. It arises not from a private inner conviction, but rather from a shared public opinion communicated through language. Although civil disobedience is a dissenting action consisting of transgressing a law, it may be a useful tool of approaching public consensus. The very action of civil disobedience is based on the general consent of every citizen and on the mutual agreement and promise that constitute a political body. Finally, this paper argues that disobedience significantly differs from a mere criminal activity. While the success of a criminal action is based on the secrecy of goals and actions, civil disobedience is a publicly visible communicative action whose aim is to change the world and pursue some alleged public good. It is thus not primarily bounded to self-interest as a criminal activity.

Judith Wagner's contribution "Escape from the Aporia of Action or Erratic Entity: Hannah Arendt vs. Paul Ricoeur on the Concept of Political Forgiveness" examines the concept of political forgiveness by juxtaposing Hannah Arendt's and Paul Ricoeur's thoughts on this topic. Whereas Arendt claims that forgiveness is vital to creating a political sphere by solving the predicaments of human action, Ricoeur discards the politicization of forgiveness. Forgiveness is an enormously attractive concept in a social context for it breaks vicious cycles of violence and revenge and allows for a healthy integration of the individual into society. But there are major obstacles to the transfer of this concept from the interpersonal or social to the political level. The most significant one turns out to be the difficulty to control, to volitionally evoke – and hence to institutionalize – forgiveness. Thus, the conclusion of this analysis concurs with Ricoeur's disillusion: "There is no politics of forgiveness."

The article "Compelling Questions linked to the Use of Satire in Chinese Literature of the 20th century" by *Veronika Teryngerová* deals with the understanding of satire which Chinese satirists and humourists formed after the introduction of the concept of humour outlined by Lin Yutang in the 1920s. This scholar and writer began a discussion of the terms "humour" and "satire" by juxtaposing them, which gave rise to a future conflict between two main ideas: either that satire is a vicious enterprise and humour one that is preferable in literature for being gentle and humane; or that humour is innocuous, therefore useless, while satire is revealing, meaningful, socially transformative and therefore more desirable. These two opposing notions shaped the way satire was perceived in the 20th century by Chinese writers and critics alike. It is shown here that defining satire, along with its role and justification in Chinese literature, was a difficult task for those who advocated its use and in light of the simplifying dualism of the discussion, more aspects of satiric writing are suggested to be taken into consideration when making a solid evaluation of satiric output in China today.

Luther Aquino shows in his "*Pasyon*, Reason and Freedom: Sketches for an Agonistic Rethinking of Philippine Democracy" that standard histories of the Philippine Revolution against Spain accord a preeminent role to the liberal European-educated *ilustrado* class, given its eventual leadership by the Katipunan. By the 1970s, however, pioneering work by Reynaldo Ileto elucidated not only the critical role mass movements played in the Revolution, but also the way popular reason had diverged from *ilustrado* reason in justifying the revolt. Different grammars of liberation were in tension with each other during the revolutionary era, with the liberal *ilustrado* grammar eventually eclipsing the religious popular grammar. This is reflected in the contrasting significations that existed for such terms as *katwiran* (reason) and *kalayaan* (freedom). Aquino argues that the eventual marginalization of popular reason in the nascent republic reveals the shortcomings of Enlightenment-based statecraft and is at the root of the country's many present-day pathologies. The author proposes Mouffe's agonistic pluralism as a corrective to this primordial democratic deficit, which would allow for a rethinking of the Philippines' contemporary democratic institutions.

This volume could kindly be realized with the support of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of Czech Republic. Ms. Paula Solon did the revision of the English written contributions edited in this volume; we are deeply indebted to her for her careful assistance.

The Editors

Altering Perspective: Hume on Moral Judgement

Helmer Stoel

At first sight, the moral and political theory of David Hume seems to contain a paradox: a paradox that appears in various forms throughout his writings. On the one hand, he considers self-interest as the most dangerous tenet of human nature. It is "the source of all injustice and violence", an instinct "directly destructive of society" (Hume 1978b [T], 480, 492), that can only be constrained by the rules of justice and the social function of morality.[1] On the other hand, however, Hume also places the same instinct at the *origin* of both justice and morality. Where justice consists of collectively organised self-interest, moral judgement, paradoxically, gains objectivity by its limiting effect.[2] Only a closer examination of Hume's thought dissolves this paradox. Contrary to other authors partaking in the eighteenth-century debate concerning the essential wickedness or virtuousness of human nature (such as Mandeville and Shaftesbury), Hume avoids such categorical claims. Human nature, for him, is deeply ambiguous.[3] Although human selfishness *as such* is an unalterable fact, as a cause it is morally *neutral*.[4] Self-interest, in other words, can work for both virtue and vice.[5] But what determines the difference? This question lies at the heart of his moral and political theory.

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[1] All further references to *A Treatise of human nature* shall be indicated with the signal T.

[2] T, 495, 536.

[3] In his essay *Of Civil Liberty*, for instance, Hume remarks: "It is not fully known, what degree of refinement, either in virtue or vice, human nature is susceptible of; nor what may be expected of mankind from any great revolution in their education, customs, or principles." (Hume 1987, 87-88)

[4] For man's selfishness to disappear, Hume writes, it would be necessary "to new-mould the human mind" (T 521).

[5] T, 492.

The key to the answer can be found in a passage of *A Treatise of Human Nature*. After arguing that no other passion (such as benevolence) is sufficiently strong enough to counter-act vicious self-interest, Hume concludes: "There is no passion, therefore, capable of controlling the interested affection, but the very affection itself, *by an alteration of its direction*" (Ibid. 492, my emphasis).[6] What, in its turn, influences the direction of self-interest is the faculty of moral judgement, and in the more narrow political sphere, the general rules of justice. Their task can be summed up as an inversion of what Hume calls 'natural morality': a morality characterised by partiality, as well as a general strong propensity of the imagination to prefer the near to the remote. Moral judgement, in the last instance, is for Hume a *matter of perspective*.

1. Politics as a part of the anatomy of human nature

With his *Treatise of Human Nature,* Hume wanted to do nothing less than revolutionize philosophy. Although he borrowed many ideas from predecessors like Locke and Berkely, he forced a break with the philosophy current in his time. Secure knowledge, according to Hume, could only be acquired through use of 'the experimental method'. It is often supposed that in referring to this method, he was drawing an analogy between his enterprise and that of Newton, the seventeenth- century scientist who revolutionized physics, and who served as an exemplar of the scientific spirit throughout the eighteenth century. Hume wanted to apply the experimental method to 'moral subjects'; subjects in the domain of what was called 'moral philosophy' in the eighteenth century - the counterpart of what belonged to 'natural philosophy'. Instead of finding the laws of nature, Hume sets out to find the laws that govern human thought and behavior. In this manner, he constructs the main theoretical object of his enquiries: 'human nature'. All the sciences, he argues, are to some degree dependent on it. He boldly suggests "to march up directly to the capital or centre of these sciences, to human nature itself" (T xvi). By establishing 'the principles of human nature', the regularities that structure our experience, Hume attempts to erect a new and secure foundation for all the sciences.

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[6] See also: T 521.

The experiments of his 'experimental method', however, are of a curious kind. Where experiments in physics are conducted under repeatable and stable conditions, so that the cause of a certain effect can be identified, those proposed by Hume consist in observing the effects of "different circumstances and situations" on the human mind (ibid. xvii). Through the comparison of multiple clusters of observations, we are able to distill the general principles of human nature.[7] The term 'observations' here must be understood in a broad sense, not only comprising our perceptions of external objects, but also the perceptions of our own inner states. In *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, the book that Hume published nine years after the *Treatise* in an attempt to introduce his ideas to a wider audience, he recognises the difficulty of isolating just one object from the flux of our experience (Hume 1978a, 7). Nevertheless, he believes that the philosopher, by correct habits of thought – not going beyond the limits of our experience, and a 'modest' use of reason – is able to fix the objects of our experience. Both in the *Treatise* and in the *Enquiry*, Hume likens himself to an anatomist; just as the latter investigates the separate parts of the human body (including their positions and relations to each other), he investigates human nature (T 620; Hume 1978a, 4).

Human nature, for Hume, is both the name of a description and of a norm. Where on the one hand it refers to those regularities in human thought and behavior that are universally given, on the other it represents an ideal towards which one can strive. Human nature refers both to a set of regularities and an indeterminability; as Hume remarks in his discussion of the passions: "Changeableness is essential to it (T 283). At the same time, human nature clearly also serves as a normative horizon against the backdrop of which various phenomena can be evaluated. Describing human nature means determining the operations of all of our faculties, in particular those of our reason. By doing this, we are able to discover the proper scope of our reason, and can prevent it from exceeding its limits. Understanding how our faculties operate is essential to the science of human nature. Hume held that such an understanding was a necessary requirement for metaphysical thought that went beyond unwarranted speculation: "True metaphysics" is only possible if we reason accurately (Hume 1978a, 6).[8] Kant's later project of his first *Critique*, of prescribing a correct use of reason on which the new foundations of a metaphysics can be based, is in this respect identical to that of Hume.

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[7] For such a comparison between multiple sets of experiments, see for example T 94-106.

It is important to note, however, that Hume remained sceptical of any description that pretends to explain the ultimate principles of human nature.[9] Since any knowledge of the regularities that structure human thought and behavior can only come to us through observation and experience, – authorities that are rather capricious – we cannot prove it to be necessarily true or infallible. Instead, we must, again and again, measure our knowledge with the thread of our experience. Throughout the *Treatise,* Hume warns against the temptation of venturing beyond the bounds of our experience. He was conscious of the implicit circularity of his enterprise: "We ourselves are not only the beings, that reason, but also one of the objects, concerning which we reason" (T xv).

Slightly self-apologetic, Hume contrasts his work as an anatomist to that of a painter. He was only interested in philosophy insofar as it served what he called 'common life', and consequently tried to legitimize his abstract 'speculations' from such a perspective. In comparison to the 'easy philosophy' (roughly equivalent to 'practical philosophy' today), that paints pictures of human life in its concreteness, Hume feared that his 'abstract philosophy' might appear to be without value. He counters this with the argument that the painter needs the anatomist's knowledge of the parts and their connections to accurately depict his subject. Thus the anatomy of human nature is indispensable to an investigation of man as a practical being.

Politics, for Hume, forms a part of the anatomy of human nature. In his essay *Politics as a Science*, published in 1741, one year after the third book of the *Treatise*, he argues that the regularities that underlie politics can be uncovered:

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[8] Describing Hume's empiricism as anti-metaphysical, as some scholars have done, seems in conflict with his stated intentions.

[9] See for example: "Any hypothesis, that pretends to discover the ultimate original qualities of human nature, ought at first to be rejected as presumptuous and chimerical." (xvii) In the *Enquiry* Hume remarks that the "ultimate springs and principles are totally shut up from human curiosity and enquiry" (Hume 1978a, 19).

> "So great is the force of laws, and of particular forms of government, and so little dependence have they on the humours and tempers of men, that consequences almost as general and certain may sometimes be deduced from them, as any which the mathematical sciences afford us." (Hume 1987, 16)

Just as the anatomy of human nature establishes the principles that structure our experience, so politics as a science could determine the form of government and the laws that would lead to the best possible society. Including politics in his general project, Hume seems to efface an important difference, for in contrast to the scientific question of human experience, political theory is clearly a primarily *normative* affair: one that depends on justifiable criteria. Although Hume offers such criteria, the inclusion of politics in his anatomy of human nature appears unconvincing from the viewpoint of *modern* liberal theory, since one of the premises of modern liberalism is exactly the exclusion of all references to the supposed 'nature of man'.[10] Nevertheless, as I hope to show, his conception of moral judgement – that is, of course, part of human nature – remains relevant.

2. *Imagination and reason*

Although Hume's anatomy is often simply described as a psychology, this does not take seriously the anti-Cartesian tendency present in his thought.[11] Instead of departing from a dualism between the material and the mental (the *res cogito* and *res extensa*), Hume's empiricism poses a continuum between those things traditionally conceived of as originating from the body, and those created from a – to some degree voluntary – activity of the mind. Moreover, by conducting the study of human nature *at large*, and by constantly emphasizing the intersubjective dimension of human experience, Hume departs from a much more decentralized notion of the subject than an orthodox reading of his work allows for.

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[10] Those forms, institutions, and laws are the best, states Hume, "by which liberty is secured, the public good consulted, and the avarice or ambition of particular men restrained and punished" (Hume 1987, 26).

[11] Deleuze describes this in the following manner: "*Être un moraliste, un sociologue, un historien* avant *d'être un psychologue* pour *être un psychologue*." (Deleuze 1953, 2)

In book I of the *Treatise*, Hume enquires into the workings of our understanding. The basic assumptions of his theory are well-known. All our perceptions, the material of our experience, are either based on impressions or on ideas. The impressions are those perceptions "which enter with most force and violence" (such as our sensations, passions, and emotions) (T 1). Ideas, on the other hand, are less forcible and lively images drawn from our impressions. Hume subdivides both categories into 'simple' and 'complex' instances. While simple ideas are exact representations or copies of their corresponding simple impressions, more complex ideas – of non-perceived or non-existing objects, such as a never visited city or a unicorn – are formed through a combination in the imagination of multiple simple ideas. On the basis of this scheme Hume establishes 'the first principle' of human nature: "all our simple ideas proceed either mediately or immediately, from their correspondent impressions" (T 7). Hence, we cannot conceive of something that transcends our experience; there is nothing 'beyond' or 'above' it:

> "Let us chase our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe; we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can we conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear'd in that narrow compass." (T 67-68)

Although the imagination thus remains bound to the material provided by our perceptions, it enjoys the liberty to alter the 'order and form' of the original perceptions, thus composing new ideas.[12] It can both combine and separate ideas. As we will see, by endowing the imagination with such a powerful creative capacity, Hume reverses the traditional order between reason and the imagination. Where earlier the imagination was condemned to produce illusions, while reason alone could intuit the rational structure of the universe, now the imagination is promoted to a faculty that structures our perception of reality itself (even though it still produces illusions): "Nothing is more free than the imagination of man." (Hume 1978a, 31)[13]

Yet next to the dependence on the material of our perceptions – what we could call the material constraint – the freedom of our imagination is to some degree limited by the principles of association between ideas (we could call this the *formal* constraint). In order to explain the regular occurrence and concurrence of the same complex ideas, Hume introduces three universal principles that guide the operations of the imagination: resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. This formal constraint is not as absolute as the material one, however, for the principles of association merely indicate *regular* – but not necessary – ways in which the imagination connects ideas with each other.[14] Although these three principles are neither the only conceivable principles, nor infallible in use, Hume considers them to be the most general ones.[15]

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[12] T 9-10.

[13] See also: ibid. 260.

Hume's discussion of the principle of cause and effect in part III of the first book, is his most famous contribution to philosophy. Arguing that reason cannot discover a 'necessary connection' between cause and effect, a logical ground on which we can infer one from the other, he concludes that the principle is based on nothing but a 'constant conjunction' of the two, a custom of transferring the past to the future (T 93; Hume 1978a, 38). Seeing one event – say the darkening of the sky– will lead us to expect that a similar event as in the past will succeed this, namely, that it will start to rain. The same applies to strict causal relations, such as the event of rain, followed by the fact that the street becomes wet.

In fact, all of our knowledge (both practical and theoretical) that we have gained from experience ultimately rests on nothing but custom - another principle of human nature, and "the great guide of human life" as Hume calls it, (Hume 1978a, 29). Without custom we would not be able to make inferences. Of itself pre-reflexive, it is a condition for all reflection. Through the constant conjunction of two events, or more exactly the repeated *association* of two objects in two distinct ideas, we gain a sense of continuity that allows us to extrapolate an expectation of the future from the happenings in the present and the past.[16] Indeed, custom, for Hume, is a sort of synthesizing mechanism that underlies uniformity as such. Our lives without 'customary conjunctions' would be like those of animals, for without them we would not be able to go beyond our immediate sense perception (what Hegel would later treat as the problem of 'sense certainty').[17] But how do customs come into existence? And if our reasoning ultimately rests on nothing but custom, do we still possess criteria to separate the true from the false?

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[14] Hume considered the 'principles of association' as one of his greatest philosophical innovations. They are absolutely central to his thought. As he writes in the *Abstract* to the *Treatise*: "Twill be easy to conceive of what vast consequence these principles must be in the science of human nature, if we consider, that so far as regards the mind, these are the only links that bind the parts of the universe together, or connect us with any person or object exterior to ourselves." (T 662)

[15] T 92-93.

[16] Ibid. 102.

As we have seen, a source of custom is the repeated association of certain ideas on the basis of our immediate perceptions. Interestingly, another source that Hume mentions is education, an 'artificial cause'. Education he understands in a broad sense, as everything that contributes to the formation of a custom in an indirect manner. If an idea is frequently presented to us, it can catch hold of us, just like those ideas that stem from our immediate perceptions. Hume illustrates this with the phenomenon that you can think that you've met someone whom you've often heard talked about, although in fact you've never *seen* him or her.[18] Thus, by the *artificial* presentation of certain ideas to us, through representative media such as language and painting, we can develop a propensity towards them. In this context, Hume points approvingly to the ceremonial practices of the Roman Catholics, who in spite of their "superstition" are aware of the fact that sensible objects can enliven our ideas (Hume 1978a, 34; T 99).

> "Custom also enables us to have general ideas. Hume subscribes to the view that there are only particular ideas, i.e. the ideas we have are always *of* particular objects, whether they represent something general or not – the state, for example. Nevertheless, we can reason with them as if they were universal. But only custom can make our ideas 'general in their representation'". (T 24)

The principles of association, according to Hume, are more central to our everyday thought and action than reason. Nevertheless, reason alone – although peripheral – can distinguish between truth and error. Hume is well aware that the possibility of science as such depends on this distinction. So how does reason operate? Reason can have two objects: either 'relations of ideas' or 'matters of fact'. Where relations of ideas can be established *a priori* through 'demonstrative reasoning', without reliance on anything existent, matters of fact, on the other hand, can only be established on the basis of *experience*, with what Hume calls "moral reasoning" (Hume 1978a, 15,22). Truth consists in the discovery of *real* relations between ideas, or alternatively, in the agreement between our ideas of objects and their *real* existence (T 448, 458). When our ideas are true, there is a correspondence between them and a real state of affairs. Hume speaks of "a kind of pre-established harmony" between the succession of our ideas and nature (Hume 1978a, 36). In spite of Hume's radical and modern attitude, in such ideas the classic (Stoic) motif of the self-attunement of man to nature comes becomes apparent. Ultimately, what separates the reality from fiction is nothing but the vividness and firmness of our idea of an object - the *belief* that we attach to it (Hume 1978a, 31). For Hume, reality is what persists, independent of the variations of our imagination.

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[17] Hegel 1986, 82.

[18] T 117.

In the famous conclusion of the first book, Hume outlines an *aporia* between a reason wrought with contradictions, and on the other hand, an imagination without objective criteria. The imagination, operating without the guidance of reason, will lead us into grave errors. "Nothing is more dangerous to reason that the flights of the imagination" Hume warns us (T 265). Conversely, reason when 'acting alone' subverts itself, since it cannot lead us to a coherent world-view. Out of itself it cannot provide us with determinate criteria on the basis of which to prefer one philosophical claim in favour of the other. As Hume sums up the *aporia*: "We have, therefore, no choice left but betwixt a false reason and none at all." (T 268) Neither reason nor the imagination alone is to be trusted. As we shall see, however, the rigorous skepticism with which he treats purely theoretical subjects, becomes more moderate in the face of practical matters. This difference is perhaps due to the anti-theoretical propensity of his thought: "The practice of the world goes farther in teaching us the degrees of our duty, than the most subtle philosophy, which was ever yet invented." (569)

3. The sense of virtue

As a moral philosopher, Hume combines what today is called meta-ethics with virtue ethics. This two-sided approach corresponds to the double function of human nature mentioned earlier, as both a description *and* a norm. Hume not only pursues the question of how we should live, but also concerns himself with the *origin* of our "sense of morals".[19] The third book of the *Treatise* not only deals with virtue as such, but also with the general principles of human nature from which our *sense* of virtue stems (T 619). Hume naturalizes morality – although, as shall become clear, in a much more ambiguous manner than is often assumed. As all domains of his investigation, ethics, for Hume, should be grounded upon the experimental method. In *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (commonly called 'the Second Enquiry') a work of 1751 that Hume himself considered to be his best, he pleads that all systems of ethics not founded upon "fact and observation" should be rejected (Hume 1983, 16). His goal is to find the general principles that guide our moral and social behaviour (Hume 1983, 16, T 473).

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[19] Nietzsche's notorious question, that of the value of values, had already been posed by Hume. The former, in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, sees "the English psychologists"

The most well-known thesis of Hume's ethics, directed at the rationalists, is that the distinction between good and evil cannot be based on reason *alone* (T 457, 462). Since morality is supposed to influence our passions and actions, and since reason is "perfectly inert" in this respect, the former cannot rest on the latter (ibid. 458). As we have seen, the understanding can only establish relations between ideas or matters of fact, and neither of these two operations can produce a passion or action. A passion or an action, however, can *only* be countered by another passion or action: "Nothing can oppose or retard the impulse of passions, but a contrary impulse" (ibid. 415). For this reason, according to Hume, it is philosophically inaccurate to speak of a battle between reason and the emotions: both always remain on their own turf, as it were. The passions are primary from a practical point of view. As he famously puts it: "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" (Ibid.). Reason cannot *directly* influence our behaviour in the way that morality is supposed to do.[20] Therefore, the "rules of morality [...] are not conclusions of our reason" (ibid. 457).

Hume extends this negative argument in another direction. If the understanding would indeed be able to determine the boundaries between right and wrong on its own, it must be *demonstrated* that these can be found either in relations between ideas or in matters of fact. In the rationalist picture, reason must be able to know *something in reality,* some matter of fact, that gives the difference between right and wrong its meaning.[21] In order to avoid

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(*die englischen Psychologen*), as the first that developed an genealogical account of morality (Nietzsche 1968, 271).

[20] Note Hume's self-contradiction that morality *ought* to influence our behavior.

[21] T 468.

a circular argument, this moral quality must exist antecedent to and independent of reason.[22] "Point out distinctly the relations, which constitute morality or obligation" he challenges the rationalists (ibid. 463). To make it even more difficult, Hume specifies two properties that these relations require in order to support the claims of a coherent rationalistic ethics. First, these relations would have to be "betwixt internal actions, and external objects", and secondly, they would have to be universally valid – and thus apriori (ibid. 465). Hume's legitimation for these two requirements – that we shall not discuss here because it would take us too far afield – is rather problematic. Unsurprisingly, he concludes his argument with the observation that it is impossible to demonstrate the existence of such relations.[23]

Moral right and wrong, for Hume, do not lie in internal or external objects *as such*, but in subjective states brought about by our reflective engagement *with* certain objects (characters and actions). He writes: "[...] when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it." (Ibid. 469) In short, the source of morality lies in feelings of approval and disapproval. Virtue and vice are perceptions of the mind - impressions – and can be compared with colors, sounds, heat and cold.[24] According to Hume, the disinterested contemplation of a virtuous character or action causes us pleasure or satisfaction, while a vicious object causes us pain or uneasiness. Again and again he emphasizes that these contrary feelings are of '*a particular kind*' (ibid. 471). Virtue is what causes us to experience a certain *form* of pleasure. Hume does not simply equate the moral good with pleasure *as such*, like Hobbes (who says we call all of our 'objects of appetite' good).[25] The moral good is not a mere fancy disguise for whatever pleases us, but rather a certain form of pleasure that must be thought of as inseparable from the good (they are equiprimordial): "We do not infer a character to be virtuous, because it pleases: But in feeling that it pleases after such a particular manner, we in effect *feel* that it is virtuous" (Ibid., my italics). Or as Hume puts it differently in one of his essays: "The virtuous sentiments or passion produces the pleasure, and does not arise from it" (Hume 1987, 85).

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[22] Ibid. 467. "Reason must find them, and can never produce them", Hume says (T468). A transcendental view of reason, that we as rational beings necessarily perceive the world in a manner that is rationally structured, would be able to legitimize such a circularity.

[23] See also: Hume 1983, 84.

[24] T 469.

[25] Hobbes 2008, 39.

The pleasure that virtue conveys to us bears resemblances to the *aesthetic* pleasure brought forth by the contemplation of an aesthetic object. For Hume, the ethical contemplation of an action, and the aesthetic contemplation of an artwork bear a *common ground* beyond mere analogy, the name of which is 'taste'. Just as there is a taste in beauty, there is a taste in morals (T 547). The feeling of pleasure or pain constitutes our approval or disapproval. Our approval is *implied* in the pleasure, Hume remarks (ibid. 471). His way of phrasing it here is interesting, since it seems to point towards the thought that our affects contain cognitive content (whether this is propositional or not), a position that both Martha Nussbaum and Sharon Krause advocate.[26] *That* a person experiences pleasure in the reflection of a certain action, means that he *approves* of a trait of that action. We approve of a trait because it contains something we value. Someone who values honesty above all else, can be pleased if another confesses that he has been lied to, however harmful this lie might have been. Our feelings of pleasure and displeasure thus 'express' the value-scheme that we have. "Passion *is* the affective manifestation of value," as Cheryl Hall has put it succinctly.[27] This thought contests the metaphorical blindness usually ascribed to the passions – a blindness that Hume too explicitly rejects.[28] We do not only perceive with 'the eye of the mind', as the rationalist tradition is so fond of assuming, but also, or even *primarily*, with the eyes of both our heart and gut.[29] Going even further, the activity of reasoning *itself* might even be much more dependent on our feelings, or sensibility than is commonly thought. Thinking might be nothing more – or *less* – than the ability to perceive the world, and the gap between us and it.

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[26] For Nussbaum, see for example *Political Emotions. Why Love Matters for Justice* (Nussbaum 2013, 399). For Krause, see: *Civil Passions: Moral Sentiment and Democratic Deliberation* (Krause 2008, 7-8).

[27] Quoted in Krause 2008, 8.

[28] T 413.

[29] Descartes, and many of his predecessors speak of an 'eye of the mind' that is able to 'intuit' the truth, without any mediation of the senses (Descartes 2008, 26).