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Hume on Moral Obligation

by

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INTRODUCTION

The renewal of interest in empiricism in the twentieth century has brought with it a corresponding renewal of interest in the philosophy of David Hume. Most, however, of the many volumes of discussion and criticism which have dealt with Hume have centered on his epistemology. More recently some attention has been paid to his ethical writings. Unfortunately, a large part of this revival of interest in Hume's ethics is due, first, to the now famous 'is-ought' passage (T469-70)¹ which has drawn

¹All references to Hume's works will be inserted in the text according to the following key:


Thus (T469-70) means Treatise, as above, pages 469-70.
discussion far outweighing the importance which the passage ever held as an integral part of Hume's ethical thought, and second, to the fact that Hume's surface clarity often masks very complex arguments which makes it very easy to lift passages out of context and to use them in support of a number of incompatible positions. As a consequence of both these factors we find in the contemporary literature that Hume is cited in support of many, if not all, the positions on the spectrum of ethical thought.

More recently a consistent line of criticism has been leveled at Hume's ethics. The substance of this criticism is that Hume's conception of moral judgment combined with his general theory of action prevent him from having an adequate view of moral obligation. These criticisms are exemplified by the following quotations:

Hume's view of moral obligation precludes the possibility of our recognizing, after deliberate reflection that within any specific situation a certain act is right, and that our failure to carry it out makes us morally responsible for it.²

... Hume, in collapsing justifying and exciting reasons, i.e., in considering exciting reasons as the only type of reasons that justify the course of action taken, has inextricably bound up the notion of obligation with the notion of having a cause for doing an act, and this means that a motive is necessary in order for there to be an obligation.³

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss Hume's conception


of moral obligation and to defend it against this line of criticism. Since understanding moral obligation entails understanding the relation between the making of moral judgments and action, this thesis will analyze in some detail both Hume's theory of moral judgments and his general theory of action.

These issues will be discussed in the following manner. In order to introduce the problem and to place it in the proper historical perspective, Chapter I will discuss, without evaluation, several of Hume's criticisms of his predecessors. Chapter II will discuss Hume's theory of moral approval, where it will be shown that the feeling of moral approval is explained by Hume through the 'moral sympathy': a general psychological process which communicates non-sympathetic pleasures and pains under a peculiarly moral perspective. Further Chapter II will show, (1) how moral judgments are possible though there occur no moral sentiments, and (2) how the occurrence of non-sympathetic pleasures and pains constitute the subject matter for normative ethics. Chapter III will be concerned with the question of how, according to Hume, judgments in general affect action. This chapter will show that all voluntary action can be explained by reference to certain basic human dispositions which manifest particular desires when appropriate ideas are presented, together in some cases with certain judgments which direct fulfillment of those de-
sires. Further, this chapter will show that Hume's basic purpose in his analysis of these various factors was to show that reason alone never provides a motive to action; and consequently, that particular judgments cannot serve without reference to desires which they direct or the dispositions which they prompt to explain action. Chapter IV will be concerned with Hume's analysis of moral obligation. This chapter will show, (1) that significant segments of the established patterns of behavior which are considered moral are artificial patterns established by directive empirical judgments about the necessity for and of certain types of intersocial behavior; (2) that the moral significance which these patterns of behavior have is an acquired characteristic; (3) that action consciously in accordance with these established patterns of moral behavior are actions motivated by a sense of duty, traditionally called moral obligations; and (4) that the motives, dispositions, and desires which cause these dutiful actions are constituted by a conjunction of natural, experiential, and environmental forces. Chapter V will discuss, in some detail, the plausibility of Hume's view of moral obligation through an analysis of the work of several of Hume's critics.

One final note, it will not, in any sense, be the purpose of this thesis to evaluate Hume's conceptions of moral judgment or action in general, but only to evaluate them insofar as they provide conditions for an adequate
conception of moral obligation. Further, it will not be part of the purpose of this thesis to compare the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* and *A Treatise of Human Nature*. This thesis will take the view that the *Treatise* presents the full and detailed statement of Hume's position and that the *Enquiry* presents a more limited statement though often in a more mature and succinct form.
CHAPTER I

HUME'S PREDECESSORS

Introduction.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and place in a proper historical perspective Hume's moral theory. In order to accomplish this purpose, this chapter will discuss the general line of Hume's criticism of his predecessors through an analysis of four representative arguments.

This discussion is presented with two problems. First, what is the position which Hume is attacking? This is far from an easy question to answer because Hume is not attacking specifically any of his predecessors. There are two reasons for this. First, because there was considerable confusion within the particular positions which constitute Hume's predecessors, Hume found no view sufficiently coherent to be significantly representative. Second, because Hume was going to offer a radically new perspective he was less concerned with the specific positions of his predecessors than he was with their perspective as a whole.

The second problem presented to this discussion is: what precisely is the nature of Hume's attack? This, too, is not an easy question to answer, and again for two reasons. First, Hume's criticisms of his predecessors are not
textually separate from his own more positive remarks. As a consequence, considerable care is necessary in order to separate the negative theses from the positive theses. Second, Hume, like his predecessors, often fails to separate clearly his conceptual or logical analysis from his empirical psychology. As a consequence Hume's arguments often seem illogical and unclear.

In order, therefore, to facilitate this discussion, Part One below will very briefly discuss the background of Hume's predecessors, and Part Two will discuss four arguments representative of Hume's attack on his predecessors.

Part One: The Background.

By the beginning of the Fifteenth Century two closely connected events had markedly changed man's picture of the world. First, in a revolt against the authority of the Roman Catholic Church on secular matters, the Copernican Revolution had introduced an attitude that was to separate natural science from theology and classical cosmology. Second, in a revolt against the Roman Catholic Church on ecclesiastical matters, the Reformation had introduced an attitude that was to deny the Roman Catholic Church's position as the final arbiter of moral questions. These revolutions were to create two 'new moralities'.

First, various Protestant reformed sects grew up to replace the ecclesiastical authority of the Catholic Church on moral questions and to spawn a new church ori-
ent moralitites are obvious. While the Protestant sects and
their resultant morality broke from the Catholic Church,
they did not break substantially from an ecclesiastical
heritage which was common to them both. In fact, though
they interpreted Christian authority differently (Bible
vs. Church Fathers), their moral perspective remained
generally the same, i.e., all morality remained within
religious authority. Quite to the contrary, the new mor-
ality spawned by the new science had a radically new non-
ecclesiastical perspective. In fact, if it can be said
that the proponents of this radically new morality held
anything in common it was their insistence that moral in-
quiry and moral judgments were subject respectively to de-
monstrative reasoning and demonstrative certainty. As
Hume describes it:

There has been an opinion very industriously propa-
gated by certain philosophers that morality is sus-
ceptible of demonstrative reasoning; and tho' no one
has ever been able to advance a single step in those
demonstrations; yet 'tis taken for granted that this
science may be brought to an equal certainty with
gometry or algebra. (T457)\(^1\)

\(^1\) Cf. EII170.
It was this latter, radically new morality with which Hume was to deal critically.

The remainder of this chapter will consider four arguments representative of these criticisms. Since, as was pointed out, Hume's criticism of his predecessors takes the form of a generalized attack on their perspective as a whole, it is not surprising to find in the representative arguments discussed below that Hume's criticisms are directed at the view commonly held by his predecessors that demonstrative or a priori reasoning is the source of all moral distinctions. Moreover, since it was Hume's purpose to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects it is appropriate he should choose this particular feature of his predecessors' view to attack. Hence, this line of criticism may be properly said to be consistent with Hume's own positive thesis.

Part Two: The Arguments.

Hume's first argument takes the form of a caustic challenge.

If you assert, that virtue and vice consist in relations susceptible of certainty and demonstration, you must confine yourself to those four relations, which alone admit of that degree of evidence; . . . (T463)

Shou'd it be asserted, that the sense of morality consists in the discovery of some relation, distinct from these, and that our enumeration was not compleat, when we comprehended all demonstrable relations under four heads: To this I know not what to reply, 'till some one be so good as to point out to me this new relation. (T464)²

²Cf. E11287-8.
The relations of which Hume speaks are the so-called demonstrable relations of quality, quantity, contrariety, and resemblance. If, according to Hume, moral distinctions are made by demonstrative or a priori reasoning alone, and if moral distinctions are constituted by some relation between acts and situations (as some of his predecessors had asserted), then none of the so-called natural relations which are constrained by the character of experience will be applicable. For Hume, this means that moral distinctions must be derivable from one of the four relations which obtain between 'ideas' and which are not determined by the character of experience. Hume argues further:

As moral good and evil belong only to actions of the mind, and are deriv'd from our situations with regard to external objects, the relations from which these moral distinctions arise, must lie only betwixt internal actions, and external objects, and must not be applicable either to internal actions, compared among themselves, or to external objects, when placed in opposition to other external objects. (T464-5)

In other words, moral relations should obtain only between acts and situations and not between acts alone or situations alone, otherwise we might have the curious situation in which, "... even inanimate objects would be susceptible of moral beauty and deformity." But, Hume insists, the four 'philosophical' relations can obtain between the ideas of inanimate objects, and it will thus, "... be impossible to fulfil the ... condition required to the

\[^3\text{Cf. EII293.}\]
system of eternal rational measures of right and wrong; because it is impossible to shew those relations, upon which such a distinction may be founded: . . ." (T466)

With reference to this argument Hume offers an example. Choosing what he considers to be the most awful of crimes, he asks us to consider, is the relationship between the act and situation any different in parricide than when a tree, "... dropping of its seed, it produces a sapling below it, which springing up by degrees, at last overtops and destroys the parent tree: . . ." (T467)
Clearly most men would agree that parricide is immoral and clearly most men would agree that a sapling's destruction of the parent tree is not immoral, though the relation determined by reason alone between act and situation is the same. 4

Hume's point is that demonstrative reasoning cannot provide a criterion by which we can distinguish moral from non-moral relations. 5 Hinting at his own view, Hume suggests that rather than looking to relations between acts and situations for the source of moral approbation and disapprobation, rather he says, "... turn your reflexion into your breast, and find the sentiment of disapprobation,

4Hume suggests incest as a further example. This is a crime among men but it is not usually considered a crime among the animals.

5It is interesting to note that Hume never considered the possibility that his predecessors might have been talking about some empirical relations between acts and situations such as the ones suggested by Dewey and Bradley.
which arises in you, towards this action." (T468-9)
Hume's point, a point which he considers decisive, is that morality is not the object of demonstrative reason discovering a special relation between acts and situations, but rather it is founded on the natural human reaction to certain acts and their consequences.6

It will be the purpose of Chapter II below to discuss Hume's claim that moral judgments are grounded in this 'natural human reaction'.

Hume offers a further, and more sweeping, condemnation of the view that moral judgments are derived from demonstrative reason alone. This argument is presented in Section One, Part One, Book Three of the Treatise and depends on an argument presented in Book Two, Part Three, Section Three. Hume says, "I have already prov'd, that even in human nature no relation ever alone produced any action; . . . " (T466) Hume argues, (1) that moral judgments do, as a matter of fact, have a significant effect on action, (2) that the conclusions of demonstrative reason alone can, at best, have only an incidental effect on action; therefore (3) moral judgments are not conclusions of reason alone.

In support for the first premise that moral judgments do, as a matter of fact, have a significant effect on action, Hume argues:

If morality had naturally no influence on human passions and actions, 'twere in vain to take such pains

6 Cf. EII287-9.
to inculcate it; and nothing would be more fruitless than the multitude of rules and precepts, with which all moralists abound. (T457)

In other words, one of the salient features of ethical experience is that moral judgments do affect action, and one criterion for the adequacy of any moral theory, therefore, is that it must be able to show how moral judgments are connected with action.

In support for the second premise, that the conclusions of demonstrative reasoning have, at best, only an incidental effect on action, Hume argues:

The understanding exerts itself after two different ways, as it judges from demonstration or probability; as it regards the abstract relations of our ideas, or those relations of objects, of which experience only gives us information. I believe it will scarce be asserted, that the first species of reasoning alone is ever the cause of any action. As it's proper province is the world of ideas, and as the will always places us in that of realities, demonstration and volition seem, upon that account, to be totally removed, from each other. (T413)

In other words, demonstrative reasoning per se does not deal with matters of fact; in the operation of the will man is always concerned with matters of fact, therefore, the abstract relating of ideas would seem to have no effect on the operations of the will.

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7 Cf. EII172.

8 For a detailed analysis of 'the will' and the effect of demonstrative reasoning on action see Parts One and Two of Chapter III below.

9 There is, Hume notes, an attenuated sense in which demonstrative reasoning can affect action: "A merchant desirous of knowing the sum total of his accounts with any person: Why? but that he may learn the sum which will
These arguments, according to Hume, establish the premises, and, therefore, the conclusion that moral judgments are not the conclusions of demonstrative reasoning. It will be the purpose of Chapter III below to show how, according to Hume, judgments do affect action.

Hume's criticism of his predecessors was not concerned wholly with their thesis that judgments of moral rightness or goodness were demonstrable, he was also concerned to show that their thesis, 'that it was contrary to reason to will unfitting or vicious acts', was similarly untenable. According to Hume, this thesis could mean one of two things. It could mean (1) that it is contrary to reason, i.e., logically impossible or inconsistent for certain desires to exist in the world, or (2) that it is self-contradictory to assert that such desires can exist.

Regarding the first of these possibilities, Hume notes that since "... passions, volitions, and actions ... (are) original facts and realities compleat in themselves, and implying no reference to other impressions, volitions, and actions, ..." (T416) then it is meaningless to assert that they are logically necessary, impossible, consistent, or inconsistent. Hume's point, in more contemporary terms, is that empirical facts, because they are not logically related necessarily to anything, can—

have the same effects in paying his debts, ... Abstract or demonstrative reasoning, therefore, never influences any of our actions, but only as it directs our judgment concerning causes and effects; ..." (T414)
not in principle be contradictory. Thus, 'x will y' is a singular empirical fact which per se cannot be logically contradictory, impossible, or inconsistent. It is in this context that Hume's famous and much misunderstood criticism of his predecessors occurs. Hume says:

'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger. 'Tis not contrary to reason for me to chuse my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an Indian or person wholly unknown to me. (T416)

The point of this argument is that an empirical fact, in this case a preference, cannot be qualified as consistent or inconsistent. Hume follows this point with another similar point. He says:

'Tis as little contrary to reason to prefer even my own acknowledg'd lesser good to my greater, and have a more ardent affection for the former than the latter. (T416)

Again, the fact that someone might choose his own acknowledged lesser good at the expense of his own acknowledged greater good is not per se logically impossible. Hume's point in both of these arguments is to try to show that his predecessors, who say that it is logically impossible, or contrary to reason, to will unfitting acts, have failed to

\[10\] It is possible, as Kydd has pointed out (Reason and Conduct in Hume's Treatise, [New York: Russell and Russell, 1946] p. 66.), to make this argument valid, simply by inserting an empirical premise to the effect that the idea of a 'greater good' usually causes any individual who has acknowledged this object as his greater good, to act or be moved to act toward that object rather than toward some lesser good. By this ploy the choice of the lesser good becomes an instance contrary to the empirical premise and, therefore, contrary to empirical reason.
distinguish empirical truth and falsity from logical possibility and impossibility. As a matter of fact, men don't choose their own acknowledged lesser good, but it is not logically impossible that they might choose their lesser good.

Kurt Baier has failed to take the above considerations into account when he says of this argument that:

Such a view is plainly absurd. The example that he gives might even be used in teaching someone what is meant by contrary to reason. They are stock cases of things that are contrary to reason and are, therefore, chosen by Hume to drive home his paradoxical and shocking conclusion.\(^\text{11}\)

Hume's point, according to Baier, is "... the paradoxical conclusion that no human passions or affections or any actions based on them can in any sense be in accordance with or contrary to reason."\(^\text{12}\)

It is clear that Baier has missed the point. Hume's argument is only meant to show that no preference or desire is ever logically entailed by any judgment. Hume would be the first to admit that, as a matter of fact, most men would prefer the scratching of their finger to the destruction of the whole world. He would, however, deny that it's logically necessary that they should desire it.\(^\text{13}\)


\(^{12}\) Baier, p. 258.

\(^{13}\) R. D. Brookes has pointed out that this argument is consistent with Hume's theory of impressions and ideas. Since Hume classifies all perceptions into primary and se-
Regarding the second possible interpretation of this argument, that it is self-contradictory to assert that certain desires can exist, Hume argues:

Reason is the discovery of truth and falsehood. Truth or falsehood consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the real relations of ideas, or to real existence and matter of fact. Whatever, therefore, is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement, is incapable of being true or false, and can never be an object of our reason. Now 'tis evident our passions, volitions, and actions, are not susceptible of any such agreement or disagreement; being original facts and realities, compleat in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions, and actions. 'Tis impossible, therefore, they can be pronounced (italics mine) either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason. (T458)

Kydd has pointed out, correctly, that Hume is asserting that propositions about the existence of one isolated fact are not amenable to qualification as self-contradictory. 14 Thus while it is correct to say that the proposition 'triangles have four sides' is self-contradictory, and while it may be correct to say of any proposition where one term is related to another term that the proposition is self-contradictory, it is not possible to say of a proposition which asserts merely the existence of a single fact, that it is self-contradictory. In other words, before any assertion can be qualified as self-contradictory it must contain two

14Kydd, p. 77.
related terms. Singular assertions about the existence of particular passions, volitions, and actions, do not contain any related terms, therefore, they cannot properly be qualified as self-contradictory.

It will be the purpose of Chapters II and IV to discuss, respectively, the questions of the corrigibility of moral judgments and moral actions.

Hume's final argument deals with the question of the relation of moral judgments to obligation judgments. This argument is presented as a 'final comment' to Section One, Part One, Book Three of the Treatise. It has drawn more discussion and criticism from Hume's commentators than any other single passage in Hume's work. Hume says:

(1) In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is, and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or ought not. This change is imperceptible, but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it. But as authors do not commonly use this precaution, I shall presume to recommend it to the readers; and am persuaded, that this small attention wou'd subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of virtue and vice is not founded on the relation of objects, nor is it perceiv'd by reason. (T469)(Left margin numbers mine.)

Alastair MacIntyre, in his otherwise superb analy-
sis of this passage, has failed to see that this passage is meant as an attack not only on the now church oriented or 'vulgar' morality, but also on the radically new non-church oriented morality.  

In order to clarify this argument, this discussion will follow closely MacIntyre's analysis and will point out how this argument is meant as an attack on the view that obligation judgments are logically entailed by judgments of right or virtue. In section (1) (see left margin numbers) Hume is, as MacIntyre points out, "... urging us to take note of the key point where we do pass from 'is' to 'ought' and arguing that it is a difficult transition."  

Hume is saying that propositions about 'right' or 'good' or 'fittingness' do not logically entail propositions about 'the will' or 'obligations'.

According to Hume's predecessors, to make a moral judgment is to recognize that a particular act stands in a particular relation to a particular situation, and to recognize that any act which stands in this particular relation to this particular situation is obligatory. If, however, a judgment about an obligation is a judgment which relates 'willing' or 'desiring' in some particular way to some act, then these two judgments are distinct, because 'obligation' statements contain a reference to 'willing'

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15 See pp. 2-4 above.

16 Alastair MacIntyre, "Hume on 'is' and 'ought'," Philosophical Review, LXVIII (1959), 463.
or 'desiring' which is altogether absent from the moral judgment. Thus the statement 'x is good' says that 'act x is properly related to situation y' and this latter statement does not *ipso facto* entail the statement 'person A ought to do x in situation y'.\(^{17}\) To say an act is good is not necessarily the same as saying it ought to be done.

In section (2) Hume is identifying the position which he is attacking. MacIntyre points out that in section (2) Hume is "... repudiating a religious foundation for morality and putting in its place a foundation in human needs, desires, and happiness."\(^ {18}\) This is correct, for Hume's reference to the 'vulgar systems' clearly is a reference to the common religious morality of his day, but it is clearly something more. Hume says not only that a small attention would subvert the vulgar systems, but also that it will "... let us see that the distinction of virtue and vice is not founded merely on relations of objects (i.e., on relations between acts and situations) nor is it perceived by reason (i.e., by demonstrative reason)." (T469) Again, Hume is insisting that moral judgments do not *ipso facto* entail obligation judgments.

It will be the purpose of the fourth and fifth chapters to discuss Hume's view of the ground and character of moral obligations, and the relation between moral

\(^{17}\) See Kydd, p. 6.

\(^{18}\) MacIntyre, 464.
judgments and moral obligation judgments.

Conclusion.

In summary, the four arguments discussed above have one feature in common, they attack the view that moral subjects are amenable to demonstrative or a priori reasoning. In the first and second arguments Hume attacked the view that moral judgments were a priori, in the third argument Hume attacked the view that self-contradictoriness or logical impossibility are properly applicable to certain kinds of statements, or states of affairs, and finally in the fourth argument Hume argued that ipso facto judgments about 'right' and 'good' do not logically entail judgments about obligations.

It was Hume's purpose in his own moral theory to avoid these problems by offering a new empirical perspective on the traditional problems of moral philosophy. This is evident in his analysis of moral judgments (as discussed in Chapter II below), in his analysis of reason and action (as discussed in Chapter III below), and especially in his analysis of moral obligation (as discussed in Chapter IV below). The full title of Hume's major work is A Treatise of Human Nature Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects. It will be the primary purpose of this thesis to determine the character and cogency of this 'attempt' particularly as it is concerned with the 'subject' of moral obligation.
CHAPTER II
MORAL EVALUATION

Introduction.

The purpose of the present chapter is to show, "Why," according to Hume, "any action or sentiment upon the general view or survey gives a certain satisfaction or uneasiness. . . ." (T475) The primary purpose, therefore, of this chapter will be to elucidate Hume's theory of moral approval.

For Hume, the study of 'moral approval' is not primarily a normative inquiry (though it does, incidentally, define those actions and motives which are regarded as morally valuable); rather, it is an empirically descriptive study of the process of moral approval. Further, to the extent that a theory of moral approval is primarily an empirically descriptive study of moral approval, it is merely one aspect of the more general theories of experience constituted by psychology and epistemology.

Part One: The Background- Hume's Theory of the Passions.

If, as Hume had contended,¹ moral distinctions are not made by merely relating ideas, then they must be made by some impressions or character of impressions.

¹See Chapter I above.
Hume says:

Our decisions concerning moral rectitude and depravity are evidently perceptions; and as all perceptions are either impressions or ideas, the exclusion of one is a convincing argument for the other. (T470)

In other words, it is the impressions to which we must look in order to explain the virtue-vice distinction, and, as Hume says, "... we cannot remain long in suspense, but must pronounce the impression arising from virtue, to be agreeable, and that proceeding from vice to be uneasy." (T470)

This does not, however, mean that all easy impressions arise from virtue or that all uneasy impressions arise from vice. "We do not infer a character to be virtuous, (simply) because it pleases: But in feeling that it pleases after such a particular manner, we in effect feel that it is virtuous."2 (T471) But what, then, is this 'particular manner' by which we distinguish moral from non-moral impressions of pleasure and pain? In order to better understand both this process and Hume's dis-

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2Hume uses 'pleasure', 'pleasurable feeling', 'uneasiness', 'uneasy feeling', 'agreeable', 'agreeable feeling', 'satisfying', 'satisfying feeling', 'virtuous feeling', 'feeling of approval', and 'feeling of praise' interchangeably throughout the moral theory to refer to the positive moral sentiment or feeling, and similarly their negative counterparts to refer to the negative moral sentiment or feeling. These terms refer, therefore, to the basic positive and negative moral perceptions or impressions of reflection. These same terms, except perhaps 'virtuous feeling' are also used to refer to the more general positive and negative non-moral perceptions or impressions of reflection.
tinction between moral and non-moral impressions, the remainder of this section will summarize, however briefly and inadequately, Hume's theory of the passions.

The application of Hume's theory of impressions and ideas to psychology is found in Book Two of the Trea-
tise. Hume begins by reminding us of the distinction be-
tween impressions and ideas.

As all the perceptions of the mind may be divided into impressions and ideas, so the impressions admit of another division into original and secondary, ... Of the first kind are all the impressions of the senses, ... Of the second are the passions and other emotions resembling them. (T275)

He then restricts the subject matter of Book Two:

... I shall here confine myself to those other im-
pressions, which I have call'd secondary and reflec-
tive, as arising either from original impressions, or from their ideas. (T276)

Hume classifies the passions in the following man-
ner. All passions are either natural appetites or they are founded on some prior experience of pleasure and pain. Neither the natural appetites, nor pleasure and pain, can, according to Hume, be accounted for. Regarding the natu-
ral appetites, we can know the conditions which precede their occurrence; however, these conditions do not make their occurrence in any degree comprehensible.3 Hume says of the natural appetites that they are "... in-
stincts originally implanted in our natures, such as benevolence and resentment, the love of life, and the

kindness to children, . . . " (T417) They are, in other words, mere instincts and nothing more can be said of them. Similarly, why some sensations are painful, others pleasant, cannot be explained; in fact, pleasure and pain cannot be directly defined.

According to Hume, all the various distinguishable passions, which are not instincts, depend on the basic human reaction to pleasure and pain, and on the various ways the particular individual may be related to the sources of pleasure and pain. All of these passions which depend on some antecedent impression of pleasure and pain, Hume calls secondary passions, and he distinguishes them from the natural appetites which he calls primary passions. Hume further distinguishes the so-called secondary passions, i. e., those dependent on prior experiences of pleasure and pain, as direct and indirect. The direct passions are those which " . . . arise immediately from pain or pleasure." (T276) The indirect passions are those which, " . . . proceed from the same principles, [as the direct passions] but by the conjunction of other qualities." (T276)

Very little can be said about the direct passions. As direct passions, Hume lists joy, grief, sorrow, fear, hope, desire, and aversion. Since, according to Hume, a 'good' is a source of pleasure, and an 'evil' is a source of pain, the direct passions may be summarily defined:

\[4\text{In a non-moral sense.} \]
When a good is certain or probable, it produces joy. When evil is in the same situation there arises grief or sorrow.

When either good or evil is uncertain, it gives rise to fear or hope, according to the degrees of uncertainty on the one side or the other. Desire arises from good consider'd simply, and aversion is deriv'd from evil. The will exerts itself, when, either the good or the absence of evil may be attain'd by any action of the mind or body.

(T439)

These passions, according to Hume, are constituted by human nature and experience, and they are analyzable only to the extent that the conditions under which they will occur can be explained.

Hume's discussion of the indirect passions is somewhat more complex; in fact, the discussion of the specific passions of love, hatred, pride, humility, and their variations occupies nearly two-thirds of the second book of the Treatise. The indirect passions are the passions which involve, in addition to an individual who has the passion and the 'object' of the passion, a social factor, a person to whom the object of the passion belongs. This discussion will consider only the positive side of each pair.

Pride is the passion which individual 'A' has when individual 'B' perceives a valuable characteristic of 'A'. Thus, if I am a generous man and my friend recognizes my generous nature as a valuable part of my nature, I feel pride through his recognition of a valued object (generosity) which is mine. He is the individual perceiver, generosity is the attribute or object, and I am the person
to whom this attribute belongs. Hume insists that the indirect passions, as secondary passions, have their basis in the pleasure-pain distinction. My generosity is a source of pleasure to my friend, and as a source of pleasure to my friend, generosity, which is associated with me, causes me to be pleased with myself. In other words, the idea of the self and the idea of the attribute of value are associated, and since the attribute of value causes pleasure, and the attribute is associated with the self, so the lively idea of the self becomes pleasant. This, according to Hume, is pride.\(^5\)

Similarly, love is the association of a particular good with another person which causes me to think with pleasure of that other person. In this case the pleasure I get from contemplation of the good is carried over to the person to whom this good belongs. The only difference between pride and love is a difference in the relation between the person who feels the passion and the person who has the valued attribute.

These passions are dependent, as Smith points out, on a double association of impressions and ideas.\(^6\) The first association between the 'subject' of the passion and its 'object' is an association of ideas. (T283) The association between the pleasure or pain given by the object, 

\(^5\)Cf. Essays IV 144.

\(^6\)See also Essays IV 158.
and the passion itself, is an association of impressions.7

(T283)

The remainder, and in fact largest segment of
Hume's discussion of the indirect passions, is given to
supplying empirical evidence for his theoretical hypothe-
ses concerning love, hatred, pride, and humility (includ-
ing discussions of such related passions as respect and
sexual love), and to a discussion of certain variations
in the basic emotional response to experience. In this
latter discussion Hume introduces sympathy, which he de-
scribes as, "... that propensity we have to sympathize
with others, and to receive by communication their incli-
nations and sentiments, however different from, or even
contrary to our own." (T316) Sympathy is, as the suc-
ceeding sections will show, a very important aspect of
Hume's theory of moral approval, and demands, as a con-
sequence, a separate and more detailed study.

In summary, Hume's classification of the pas-
sions has been wholly in terms of the theory of impres-
sions and ideas: The primary passions are mere impres-
sions as are pleasure and pain; the secondary passions
are aroused through a prior impression of pleasure and
pain; when direct they are aroused wholly through an
association of ideas; when indirect they depend on a
further association of impressions.

7Smith, p. 186.
Part Two: The Sympathy Process.

The sympathy process is introduced in Book Two, Part Two, Section Eleven, entitled, "Of the Love of Fame." The significance of this process for the present discussion is clear. Sympathy, according to Hume, is the process through which we have the moral sentiments which serve as the ground of moral judgments. The relevance of the sympathy process to Hume's moral theory will be discussed in Part Three below.

Hume describes sympathy as the process through which, "... the ideas of the affections of others are converted into the very impressions they represent, ..." (T319) Hume introduces sympathy in order to account for the fact that,

Our reputation, our character, our name are considerations of vast weight and importance; ... [and yet they] have little influence [on the passions] when not seconded by the opinions and sentiments of others. (T316)

Sympathy accounts, according to Hume, for our concern with our reputation, character, and name, by explaining how the opinions of others affect us. Since the vivacious idea of a passion is the passion itself, in order to show how the ideas or affections of others affect us, all that is needed is to show first, how the idea itself is presented, and second, how this idea is sufficiently enlivened so as to become the passion itself.

In order to get the idea presented we need, ac-
cording to Hume, a causal belief. He says:

When any affection is infus'd by sympathy, it is at first known only by its effects, and by those external signs in the countenance and conversation which convey an idea of it. (T317)

In other words, the external signs of A's pain p (such as writhing and crying out) constitute the initial awareness in B. These external signs when associated with the customary effects of B's own past experiences of pain bring about B's belief in the existence of A's pain. The idea of p may then be enlivened into the impression p, i.e., the pain actually felt as a pain in B, according to Hume, because the lively idea of the self is always present to us. Since it is easy to associate by resemblance the idea of the self with the idea of another person, the idea of the self becomes substituted for the idea of the other, constituting an associative link sufficient to allow the vivacity of the idea of the self to be transferred to the idea of the pain.  

Hume's theory of sympathy is not inconsistent with his discussion of personal identity as Smith has suggested: "Hume's exposition does not here [regarding sympathy] have its usual lucidity, probably for the reason that he had come to be uneasily aware that it is very doubtfully compatible with the teaching with regard to the self maintained in Book I." (Smith, p. 171.) Hume's analysis in the section on the identity of the self, or, more properly, the mind, is an analysis of a conception of self proposed by "... some philosophers who imagine we are at every moment intimately conscious of what we call our self; and are certain beyond the evidence of a demonstration both of its perfect identity and simplicity." (T251) (Italics mine.) Hume's attack, in this section, on personal identity is an attack on a particular conception of the self, a "... self [that] is supposed to exist after that manner, ..." (T251) a simple substance self to which perceptions are ascribable as qualities. Hume never denies that we have an idea of the self, he only denies..."
The similarity between the transfer of vivacity here and the transfer of vivacity discussed in Book One is obvious. Hume notes that, "What is principally remarkable in this whole affair is the strong confirmation these phaenomena give to the foregoing system concerning the understanding. . . ." $^9$ (T319) The similarity between sympathy and causal belief, often noticed by Hume's commentators, $^10$ is based on their mutual dependence on the more basic principle that vivacity can be transferred across any sufficiently strong associative link. $^11$

Certain analyses of that idea. Hume, in fact, says, "'tis evident that the idea or rather impression of ourselves is always present with us and that our consciousness gives us so lively a conception of our own person that 'tis not possible to imagine that anything can in this particular go beyond it." (T316)

$^9$Hume's characterization of causal belief exemplifies this similarity: "'Tis by habit we make the transition from cause to effect, and 'tis from some present impression that we borrow that vivacity which we diffuse over the correlated ideas." (T53-54)

$^10$Smith, p. 10ff.

$^11$Smith's insistence that the sympathy mechanism was conceived by Hume before the belief mechanism is supposedly substantiated by their similarity. "There is, as I have already suggested, evidence pointing to the conclusion that Hume had arrived at his doctrine of sympathy before tackling, or at least before finding an answer to the problems of belief and that it was by analogy with sympathy both in its intrinsic character and its mode of operation that he later formulated his doctrine of belief." (Smith, p. 10) While Smith's thesis is interesting from an historical perspective it seems to have little exegetical "cash value." Since the belief mechanism does not depend logically or in any other way on the sympathy mechanism it would seem to matter little in understanding Hume's philosophy which he conceived first. The similarity does, of course, exemplify the consistency of Hume's thought.
In addition, contiguity and blood relationship contribute to the strength of the associative link of resemblance necessary for the transfer of vivacity. As Hume says: "The stronger the relation is betwixt ourselves and any object, the more easily does the imagination make the transition, and convey to the related idea the vivacity of conception. . . ." (T318)

In summary, Hume's initial analysis of the sympathy process asserts that under certain circumstances an observer's belief that an emotion exists in some subject can become enlivened into that emotion itself. In this initial statement Hume uses the sympathy mechanism to explain how our concern for our reputation is developed by the sympathetic feelings which are communicated to us by our admirers and detractors, e.g., our admirer's pleasure becomes our pleasure. Without this mirroring effect the concept of reputation would be meaningless and our reputation would have little influence on our passions.

Hume develops his theory of sympathy nine sections later in Book Two. Under certain circumstances sympathetic feelings may occur in spite of the fact that there do not exist any emotions in any subject. He notes that, "The communicated passion of sympathy sometimes. . . arises by a transition from affections, which have no existence." (T370) For example:

Were I present at any of the more terrible operations of surgery, 'tis certain, that even before it begun, the preparation of the instruments, the laying of the
bandages in order, the heating of the irons, with all the signs of anxiety and concern in the patients and assistants, would have a great effect on my mind, and excite the strongest sentiments of pity and terror. No passion of another discovers itself immediately to the mind. We are only sensible of its causes or effects. From these we infer the passion; and consequently these give rise to our sympathy.\(^{12}\) (T576)

In other words, an observer may observe an act which is normally associated by the observer with pain, and though neither the observer nor any subject actually has any pain the observer may experience a sympathetic emotion of pain. In situations like the 'surgery room' example it is 'familiarity with the situation' which constitutes the requisite associative link. According to Hume, it is through this latter, somewhat more complex, sympathy that the "... pleasure of a stranger, for whom we have no friendship, pleases us..." (T576) In the present case it is 'familiarity with certain situations' that extends our sympathy, rather than the physical, social, and cultural resemblance necessary in the simple sympathy discussed above.

In summary, sympathy is the process through which an observer's idea \(x\) of some subject A's emotion \(x'\) is raised to the level, in B, of the emotion itself. This process may occur in any circumstance when A actually has emotion \(x'\), or in circumstances where the prospect of emotion \(x'\) is high, or when B is sufficiently familiar with a situation to believe the emotion \(x'\) is occurring though, for example, the subject A's reaction is unfamiliar to B.

\(^{12}\text{Cf. E224-5.}\)
Sympathy is a psychological process which is applicable in a myriad of circumstances; it is, in other words, a psychological mechanism with considerable possible extension of application.

Part Three: Sympathy and Hume's Theory of Moral Approval

Introduction.

The sympathy process, as it is characterized in Part Two above, is generally agreed by Hume's commentators to be of great importance to his moral theory, though there has been considerable dissention about precisely what role it plays. Part Three of this chapter will discuss Hume's application of sympathy to his moral theory, and it will show first, how the moral sympathy is consistent with the general sympathy discussed above, and second, how moral sympathy explains moral approval.

In order to better understand the ethical significance of sympathy it is important that we make explicit some distinctions which are not always clear in Hume's discussion. This thesis will distinguish:

i. 'the moral process', as the general psychological process through which moral sentiments are felt.

ii. 'the moral perspective', as the perspective which must accompany sympathy in order for the sentiments felt to be genuinely moral sentiments.

iii. 'moral sentiment', as the sentiments accomplished through 'the moral process'.

iv. 'moral judgment', as an inductive inference about 'moral sentiments'.
v. 'moral assertion', as a statement of the form 'x is virtuous'.

These distinctions are, as the discussion below will indicate, implicit in Hume's analysis of moral approval though Hume refers to each of these factors (excepting perhaps iii) by a wide variety of terms and expressions.

Hume usually refers to 'the moral process' merely as 'sympathy' (T575, T581) or as the 'general principle upon which morals are founded'. (T473) He usually refers to the moral perspective as 'the point of view' (T603) or as the 'common [moral] point of view'. (T591) He usually refers to 'moral sentiments' as 'sentiments' or 'moral sentiments' (T591, T603, T582) or as 'sentiments of approval' (T582) or as 'feelings of satisfaction'. (T471) He usually refers to 'moral judgment' as 'general decisions' (T582) or as 'correction by reflexion of moral sentiments' (T582) or as 'inference of virtue' (T481) or as 'moral judgments'. (T591) He usually refers to 'moral assertions' as 'esteem' (T581) or as 'approval and disapproval' (T603) or as 'blame or praise'. (T584) When each of these aspects of Hume's moral theory are in place the work as a whole has considerable consistency and cogency, and the relevance of sympathy can be clearly seen.

The Moral Process.

Sympathy, as characterized in Part Two above, is a general psychological process which explains certain psychological phenomena. At the beginning of his moral theory
Hume is seeking an explanation for certain psychological phenomena which serve as the ground of moral approval. Hume asks, "Why an action or character gives a certain satisfaction or uneasiness?" Since, as Hume pointed out, "... virtue and vice are not discoverable merely by reason. ... (then) it must be by means of some impression or sentiment they occasion, that we are able to mark the difference betwixt them." (T470) How then is this feeling occasioned? Hume says:

To have a sense of virtue, is nothing but to feel a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of a character. The very feeling constitutes our praise or admiration. We go no farther; nor do we enquire into the cause of the satisfaction. 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. (T471) (Italics mine.)

In other words, moral approval is a perception, a psychological occurrence. Moral distinctions are not constituted by an inference from the feeling to the cause, rather they are these very feelings themselves. Approval and disapproval are thus irreducible feelings respectively of praise and blame. The object is not good, per se, but rather it is perceived as good. The distinction between virtue and vice is grounded in the perception and not in the object itself. More on this below.

Since there are painful and pleasurable perceptions which are not moral perceptions, Hume must first specify the distinguishing features of the peculiarly moral perceptions. Hume asks us to consider the objection:
... if virtue and vice be determin'd by pleasure and pain, these qualities must, in every case, arise from sensations; and consequently any object, whether animate or inanimate, rational or irrational, might become morally good or evil, provided it can excite a satisfaction or uneasiness. (T471)

Consider the sort of answers to this objection which are possible for any theory which holds that, "To have a sense of virtue, is nothing but to feel a satisfaction of a particular kind. . ." (T471) The possible answers are:

i. The pleasures and pains constitutive of moral feelings are different, as feelings, from non-moral feelings of pleasure and pain; and the cause of this difference is unknown.

ii. The pleasures and pains constitutive of moral feelings are different, as feelings, from non-moral feelings of pleasure and pain; and this is explained by the fact that they are a product of a moral sense.

iii. The pleasures and pains constitutive of moral feelings are different, as feelings, from non-moral feelings of pleasure and pain; and this difference is explained by the fact that they are a product of a general psychological process working under specifically moral circumstances.

iv. The pleasures and pains constitutive of moral feelings are not different, as feelings, from non-moral feelings; but they are distinguishable because they are a product of a moral sense.

v. The pleasures and pains constitutive of moral feelings are not different, as feelings, from non-moral feelings; but they are distinguishable because they are a product of a general psychological process working under specifically moral circumstances.

Hume has already ruled out the 'cause' as the possible source of this distinction when he said, "To have a sense of virtue, is nothing but to feel a satisfaction, . . . We go no farther; nor do we enquire into the cause of the
satisfaction." (T471)(Italics mine.)

Hume rules out both ii and iv above when he says that it is:

... absurd to imagine, that in every particular instance, these sentiments are product of an original quality and primary constitution. ... (in fact this) method of proceeding is not conformable to the usual maxims, by which nature is conducted, where a few principles produce all that variety we observe in the universe, and every thing is carry'd on in the easiest and most simple manner." (T473)

Hinting at his own view, he then says, "'Tis necessary, therefore, to abridge these primary impluses, and find some more general principles, upon which all our notions of morals are founded."13 (T473)

Hume rules out iv and v above, because, as he notes, we have as little difficulty distinguishing between good wine and good music which both bring us pleasure as

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13 The reference in this quotation to a primary constitution is clearly a reference to a 'moral sense' theory. B. M. Laing in David Hume, (London: Ernst Benn Ltd., 1932), p. 190, has asserted to the contrary, that, "... each sense (according to Hume) has its own special data. In saying that there is a moral sense, therefore, he is asserting that there are certain moral data. ..." Similarly, E. Shearer in Hume's Place in Ethics, (Bryn Mawr, Penn.: Bryn Mawr Monograph Series 17, 1915), p. 18, says of the feelings of moral blame and praise, "... that this is due to the function of a moral sense, an original element in human nature." Similarly, J. Laird in Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature, (London: Methuen and Company, 1932), p. 125, says, "... having trounced the rationalists, Hume instantly accepted the moral sense theory." Each of these commentators has failed to take into account the possibility that Hume might have asserted a 'difference in feeling quality' as he does, (T472) while holding that these feelings are constituted by a more general psychological process. The moral data, as Laing suggests, are unique, but that doesn't imply that the process through which they are obtained is unique.
between a good dog and a morally good act. Hume says:

... an inanimate object; and the character or sentiments of any person may, both of them, give satisfaction; but as the satisfaction is different, this keeps our sentiments concerning them from being confounded, and makes us ascribe virtue to the one, and not to the other. (T472)(Italics mine.)

Hume maintains that we similarly have as little difficulty in distinguishing those pleasures and pains which arise from characters and actions.

'Tis only when a character is considered in general without reference to our particular interest, that it causes such a feeling or sentiment, as denominates it morally good or evil. ... the sentiments are, in themselves, distinct; and a man of temper and judgment may preserve himself from these illusions. (T472)

Hume is left, therefore, with two options: i or iii. He has stated that there is a difference in feeling between moral and non-moral pleasures and pains; the question then is whether that difference in feeling can be accounted for by some general psychological process. Hume's view is that it can.

The Moral Process and the Moral Perspective.

The fundamental principle of morals is, according to Hume, the sympathy process, for it is this process through which we come to have 'moral sentiments'.

To discover the true origin of morals, ... we must take the matter pretty deep, and compare some principles, which have been already examin'd and explain'd.

We may begin with considering a-new the nature and force of sympathy. (T575)

Hume argues for sympathy as the principle of morals:

14Cf. EII219-221, EII219n.
When any quality, or character, has a tendency to the
good of mankind, we are pleas'd with it, and approve
of it; because it presents the lively idea of plea-
sure; which idea affects us by sympathy, and is itself
a kind of pleasure. (T580)

But the pleasures and pains derived from sympathy are
peculiarly moral sentiments when and only when it is sym-
pathy in the 'moral perspective'. The sentiments and the
process are natural (are, in other words, the outcome and
cause respectively of certain natural abilities), and the
outcome is a peculiarly moral outcome when the perspective
is the peculiarly moral perspective.

Sympathy in the moral perspective is, according
to Hume, sympathy with any and all persons having contact
with the individual (or action) being judged, considered
merely as persons and not with regard to their relation
to the sympathetic observer. Hume says, "'Tis therefore
from the influence of characters and qualities, upon those
who have any intercourse with any person, that we blame or
praise him."¹⁵ (T582)

Consider the following examples of pleasure and
pain perceptions.¹⁶

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¹⁵Cf. EII216.

¹⁶One common misunderstanding of Hume's theory of
sympathy is exemplified by the following quotation: "It
is true that his theory implies that moral valuation in
general being an expression of sympathy is disinterested.
But the view that only such sympathy as expresses itself
in moral evaluation is disinterested is absolutely incompati-
ble with his doctrine of the nature of sympathy. Ac-
cording to Hume all sympathetic valuation is, as such, dis-
interested." (I. Hedénlius, Studies in Hume's Ethics, [re-
printed from Adolf Phalen in Memoriam, Uppsala, 1937], p.
i. **non-sympathetic:** I feel pain at the approach of danger; pleasure at the approach of something I desire, (i.e., the passions of fear and hope).

ii. **sympathetic non-moral:** I feel sympathetic toward anyone struck by a falling rock.

iii. **sympathetic non-moral:** I feel the pain of my sister's prison sentence, although I know that it is a just sentence.

iv. **sympathetic moral:** I feel pain at the contemplation of person A's character and actions because they cause non-sympathetic pains in the individuals associated with A.

Number iv, above, exemplifies the peculiarly moral sympathy through which the moral sentiments of praise and blame are felt. The 'moral process' is, therefore, a neutral and extensive sympathy with, "... those who have intercourse with any person that we blame or praise." (T582) The 'moral perspective' is the neutral and extensive regard to the persons affected by the person praised or blamed. The 'moral sentiment' is a feeling of praise or blame constituted by the 'moral process'.

Moral Judgments and Moral Assertions.

Hume suggests a possible objection to his thesis as discussed in the two preceding sections.

When any quality, or character, has a tendency to the good of mankind, we are pleas'd with it, and approve of it; because it presents the lively idea of plea-
sure; which idea affects us by sympathy, and is itself a kind of pleasure. But as this sympathy is variable, it may be thought, that our sentiments of morals must admit of this same variation... But notwithstanding this variation of our sympathy, we give the same approbation to the same moral qualities in China as in England. They appear equally virtuous, and recommend themselves equally to the esteem of a judicious spectator. The sympathy varies without variation in our esteem. Our esteem, therefore, proceeds not from sympathy. (T581)

The objection, in other words, is that since our 'moral sentiments' (derived from sympathy) are variable, then our 'moral assertions' (or esteem) should be similarly variable. It is clear that Hume is talking about 'moral assertions' for he says a paragraph later:

Our servant, if diligent and faithful, may excite stronger sentiments of love and kindness than Marcus Brutus, as represented in history; but we do not say upon that account, that the former character is more laudable than the latter. (T582)(Italics mine.)

If a judicious spectator can make a 'moral assertion' which does not coincide with his 'moral sentiment' then precisely how are 'moral sentiments' the ground of 'moral assertions'? 

According to Hume, our situation, and thus sympathetic reaction, may in certain cases vary; and since we are able to correct our assertions, then we must, somehow, be able to correct the assertions so that they coincide with the sentiments we would have if we were in the 'moral perspective'. This correction is possible because we know by reflection what sort of sentiments we would have if we were in the 'moral perspective'. We can, in other words, make our 'moral assertions' on the ground of
an inductive generalization about the 'moral sentiments' which would occur under the appropriate circumstances.

Hume says:

In general, all sentiments of blame and praise are variable, according to our situation of nearness or remoteness, with regard to the person blam'd or prais'd, and according to the present disposition of our mind. But these variations we regard not in our general decisions, but still applying the terms expressive of our liking and dislike, in the same manner, as if we remain'd in one point of view. Experience soon teaches us this method of correcting our language, where the sentiments are more stubborn and inalterable. 17 (T582)

In other words, though our 'moral sentiments' are not always corrected or even correctable, we can make 'moral assertions' which are grounded in an inductive generalization about the sorts of sentiments we would have under the appropriate circumstances. This inductive moral generalization is what was distinguished above (p. 34) as a 'moral judgment'.

Hume draws several, very helpful, analogies between sense perception and moral perception. He says:

... 'tis evident, a beautiful countenance cannot give so much pleasure, when seen at a distance of twenty paces, as when it is brought nearer us. We say not, however, that it appears to us less beautiful: Because we know what affect it will have in such a position, and by reflexion we correct its momentary appearance. 18 (T582)(Italics mine.)

17 Cf. EII217.

18 Hume similarly says: "The case is here the same as in our judgments concerning external bodies. All objects are seen to diminish by their distance: But tho' the appearance of objects to our senses be the original standard, by which we judge of them, yet we do not say
The point of this analogy is clear, if we remind ourselves that for Hume 'moral sentiments' are not constituted by any deliberate conscious inference: "We do not infer the 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." (T471)

Consider the following example. A yellow card, under standard conditions of light, distance, etc., will appear yellow. If the same card is placed under ultraviolet light it will appear white. If, however, I know what effect the light will have in such a position, then I can, through an empirical judgment or inference, say that the card is yellow. I do not say that the card appears yellow, rather, I say that the card would appear yellow under standard conditions. The inference depends on an available body of evidence (how cards which appear yellow under standard conditions appear under non-standard conditions) and an astute or reflective observer.¹⁹

¹⁹"Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compar'd to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which, according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind: And this discovery in morals, like that other in physics, is to be regarded as a considerable advancement of the speculative sciences; tho' like that too, it has little or no influence on practice." (T469)
The situation is similar, according to Hume, in moral perception. We know what sentiments would occur under certain standard conditions, i.e., under a neutral and extensive sympathy with the characters and qualities of those who have any intercourse with the person we praise and blame. We also know the variations in these sentiments, "... according to our situation of nearness and remoteness." (T582) Thus, it is possible that:

We blame equally a bad action, which we read of in history, with one perform'd in our neighborhood t'other day: The meaning of which is, that we know from reflexion, that the former action wou'd excite as strong sentiments of disapprobation as the latter, were it plac'd in the same position. (T584)²⁰

This is not to say that we can change the appearances or sentiments. "Nor do our passions often correspond to the present theory, ..." (T583) but rather it is to say that through a 'moral judgment' we can infer what sentiments would occur under the 'moral perspective', and a 'moral assertion' can, of course, be made without a 'moral judgment' whenever the genuine 'moral sentiments occur'.²¹

²⁰ Cf. EII227-230.

²¹ It is clear that for Hume moral assertions are made with the expectation of social concurrence. As Hume says: "... 'tis impossible men cou'd ever agree in their sentiments and judgments, unless they chose some common point of view, from which they might survey their object, and which might cause it to appear the same to all of them. Now, in judging of characters, the only interest or pleasure, which appears the same to every spectator, is that of the person himself, whose character is examined; or that of persons, who have connexion with him." (T591) The implication of this statement is that men do agree on their moral judgments and this agreement is guaranteed by a particular perspective. Hume says, "The only
It should be clear, at this point, that 'moral judgments' may be true or false, depending on the correctness of the inference. It should also be clear that a genuine 'moral sentiment' can serve to confirm the truth or falsity of the 'moral judgment'. The 'moral sentiments' themselves are incorrigible facts or data of ethical experience.22 We can deny them only when they are based on incorrect information about their objects. A 'moral sentiment' is as incorrigible as any appearance or perception, qua perception. Quite to the contrary, a 'moral judgment' is true or false precisely because it is an inductive germ-point of view, in which our sentiments concur with those of others, is, when we consider the tendency of any passion to the advantage or harm of those, who have an immediate connexion or intercourse with the person possess'd of it." (T602-03) Hume describes a position which is clearly non-emotivistic. He says: "... we every day meet with persons... who cou'd never converse with us on any reasonable terms, were we to remain constantly in that situation and point of view, which is peculiarly our own." (T603) This statement is not proposing a position from which correct 'moral sentiments' will be felt; rather, it is a description of the facts of ethical experience and discourse. Hume is not justifying this position beyond justifying it as the position which is, in fact, taken. Hume qualifies the last quotation: "The intercourse of sentiments, therefore, in society and conversation, makes us form some general and inalterable standard, by which we may approve or disapprove of characters and manners." (T603) Note, that Hume does not assert that we ought to form some standard, but rather, that we do form some standard.

22 J. B. Stewart, in The Moral and Political Philosophy of David Hume, (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1963), pp. 94-5, misses this point. He says, "This abstraction, this shift from a judgment of feeling known through sympathy to a judgment of particular kinds of acts, permits us to gauge from a neutral standpoint the moral stature of distant heroes, and the moral stature even of our rivals." Stewart is asserting that Hume thought only the 'moral judgment was important.
eralization. 'Moral sentiments' justify 'moral assertions', and 'moral sentiments' can justify 'moral judgments'. The relationship between 'moral assertions' and 'moral judgments and sentiments' is clearly the relationship between a proposition and the conditions which justify its use.23

Conclusion.

Hume's theory of moral approval, as discussed above, is a theory which describes, empirically, the psychological process through which human beings come to morally approve and disapprove certain actions and the characters of mind from which these actions flow. A theory of moral approval, according to Hume, is not primarily a normative inquiry; rather, it is a careful and detailed description of a particular psychological process. The most important conclusion of Hume's analysis is that moral approval is as natural a manifestation of human nature as causal belief.

23 One of the primary preoccupations of contemporary ethics has been a analysis of the meaning of moral assertions, and one of the most significant deficiencies in contemporary Hume scholarship has been a failure to realize that Hume was not primarily concerned with the meaning of moral assertions. Since it is clear, as this chapter has shown, that Hume was concerned with the conditions which would justify 'moral assertions', and since the distinction between 'moral judgments' and 'moral sentiments' cannot be understood unless Hume's concern for justifying conditions is made clear, it is not surprising to find Hume's commentators failing to make this distinction. Consider the following quotation from D. D. Raphael, The Moral Sense, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 86, "According to Hume's theory our judgment must change as do our feelings." Clearly it is misleading to assert that our judgment must change when our feelings change. It was precisely Hume's point to show that we could make correct assertions in spite of misleading feelings.
feeling proud, or being happy. In other words, Hume has insisted that moral approval is an integral part of 'what it is to be human'.

But what, then, are the implications of this analysis for normative ethics? Clearly, Hume's analysis of moral approval has established a framework within which normative ethics can ask only one kind of question, viz., the question, which acts are the acts which cause non-sympathetic feelings of pleasure and pain. The character of this question, and its ultimate effect on Hume's normative moral theory and his conception of obligation, is the subject of the next two chapters.
CHAPTER III
REASON AND ACTION

Introduction.

Since understanding moral obligation entails, according to Hume, understanding the effect of moral judgments on action, two questions must be answered before Hume's conception of moral obligation can be properly clarified: (1) How are moral judgments made? and (2) How do judgments in general affect action? The first question has been answered in the preceding chapter. It will be the purpose of the present chapter to answer the second question. This chapter will discuss, therefore, Hume's general theory of action with particular emphasis on what Hume calls 'reason as an influencing motive of the will'.

There are certain difficulties presented to this discussion. First, Hume, in spite of a concerted effort at clarification, is very much a captive of the vagaries of the vocabulary of 18th century psychology, consequently his analysis often appears unsatisfactory in the light of a more contemporary view. Second, Hume's most sophisticated statement of his action theory is, unfortunately, only available in sections whose primary purpose is an
analysis of the concept of justice. Part of the purpose of this chapter is to overcome these difficulties.

Part One: Freedom and Necessity.

Hume introduces his general theory of action with an analysis of "... that long disputed question concerning liberty and necessity; ..." (T399) in order to show that all actions of the will are caused by motives. Hume's use of 'the will' throughout his analysis of action is extremely problematic. Perhaps some clarification would, therefore, be helpful.

Hume's first definition of 'the will' states that:

Of all the immediate effects of pain and pleasure, there is none more remarkable than the will and tho', properly speaking, it be not comprehended among the passions, yet as the full understanding of its nature and properties, is necessary to the explanation of them, we shall here make it the subject of our enquiry. I desire it may be observ'd that by the will, I mean nothing but the internal impression we feel and are conscious of, when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body, or new perception of our mind. This impression, ... 'tis impossible to define, and needless to describe any farther; for which reason we shall cut off all those definitions and distinctions, with which philosophers are wont to perplex rather than clear up the question; and entering at first upon the subject, shall examine that long disputed question concerning liberty and necessity; which occurs so naturally in treating of the will. (T399)

On this definition, 'the will' refers to the conscious awareness of the purposive actions of the mind and body. It is, Hume here insists, an unaccountable awareness by the particular actor that he has acted consciously to perceive or do something.

Unfortunately, Hume fails to consistently use 'the
will' in accordance with this definition. In a somewhat later passage, the purpose of which is to define the direct passions, Hume says:

Desire arises from good consider'd simply, and aversion is deriv'd from evil. The will exerts itself, when either the good or absence of evil may be attained by any action of the mind or body. (T439)

This passage implies that 'the will' refers to some sort of faculty which has the power of producing action. In fact, Hume most often uses 'the will' in this way. Consider:

I shall endeavor to prove first, that reason can never be a motive to any action of the will; and secondly, that it can never oppose passion in the direction of the will. (T413)

I may desire any fruit as of an excellent relish; but whenever you convince me of my mistake, my longing ceases. I may will the performance of certain actions as means of obtaining any desir'd good; but as my willing of these actions is only secondary, ... as soon as I discover the falsehood of that supposition, they must become indifferent to me. (T416-17)

In both of these passages 'the will' again refers to some sort of a faculty which is productive of action. Clearly, Hume's explicit definition of 'the will' (given first above) is inconsistent with his usage in these three examples (given immediately above). In spite of this inconsistency, Hume's usage, as the latter three examples indicate, of phrases such as 'actions of the will', 'I may will', 'my willing', and 'the will exerts itself', is consistently a reference to voluntary purposive action. I would, therefore, suggest the following reading of 'the
will': clauses such as 'actions of the will', where 'will' is a noun, should be read as 'voluntary actions'; and clauses such as 'I may will', where 'will' is a verb, should be read as 'action voluntarily'. This reading is consistent with Hume's general usage, though it should be clear that it is inconsistent with his general definition. Further grounds for this reading will be evident in Hume's analysis of liberty and necessity as discussed below.

Hume's discussion of liberty and necessity depends, in the final analysis, on his definition of 'necessity' in Book One of the Treatise. Under this analysis 'necessity' is seen as the psychological propensity to infer 'object₁' from 'object₂' because they are observed in constant conjunction. Hume says:

Here then are two particulars which we are to consider as essential to necessity, viz., the constant union and the inference of the mind; and wherever we discover these we must acknowledge a necessity. (T400)

The question of the liberty or freedom of the will becomes, for Hume, the question of the constant conjunction and mutual inferability of actions and motives.¹ The substance, therefore, of Hume's argument against 'liberty as commonly understood' is that since, (1) all actions of the will are constantly conjoined with their motives, and since (2) actions and motives are mutually inferred by anyone sufficiently acquainted with the course of human affairs, then it is impossible to assert that the will is free if

¹ Cf. EII95.
by freedom is meant that actions of the will are not connected necessarily, in Hume's sense, to their motives.

Regarding the first premise, Hume argues:

... no one had pretended to deny that we can draw inferences concerning human actions and that those inferences are founded on experienc'd union of like motives and like circumstances. (T409)

Hume suggests that we look to ordinary experience. He asks, "... are the changes of our body from infancy to old age any more regular and certain than those of our mind and conduct?" (T401) In other words, a three year old child would no more be able to lift three hundred pounds than he would be able to do abstruse philosophy. Thus, Hume insists, all actions of the will are constantly conjoined with their motives.

Regarding the second premise, Hume says:

We must now show, that as the union betwixt motives and actions has the same constancy, as that in any natural operations, so its influence on the understanding is also the same, in determining us to infer the existence of one from that of the other. (T404)

Again common experience gives sufficient evidence. "A man who gives orders for his dinner doubts not of the obedience of his servants," as the "... prince who imposes a tax upon his subjects expects their compliance." (T405) Thus, Hume insists, human actions are naturally inferred one from the other in common experience.

Now, since actions are constantly conjoined with their motives, and naturally inferred from their motives, we must, according to Hume, "... believe the actions of
the will arise from necessity, and he knows not what he means when he denies it."² (T405)

Hume suggests a possible objection to this argument. "I can imagine only one way of eluding this argument, which is by denying the uniformity of actions, on which it is founded, . . ." (T403) to assert, in effect, that human conduct is irregular and, therefore, unpredictable. But, Hume replies, just because we cannot predict and explain all human action does not mean human action is free. Quite to the contrary, it suggests inferior degrees of evidence and probability. It is common, Hume points out, to insist that mad-men have no liberty despite their actions having the least regularity; and it is precisely because the mad-man lacks coherent motives that his behavior is unpredictable.

In conclusion, Hume tries to explain 'the prevalence of the doctrine of liberty however absurd'. This view, he suggests, is vitiated primarily by a failure to distinguish external constraint from internal necessity.

In summary, Hume's argument is meant to show that

²This does not mean, as Stewart has pointed out, that men have no freedom. "He [Hume] does not say that the individual has no freedom; instead what he says is that the individual, having the character he has at any moment is the immediate cause of his acts. What causes an individual to feel pain or pleasure depends on the character of that individual, which at any moment is a product within the range possible for human nature, of his education, his direct and sympathetic experiences, his station in life, and his interests." Stewart, p. 75.
since all actions of the will are connected with motives, then to say of actions of the will that they are undetermined, in the sense of lacking motives, is to say, in effect, that they are not actions of the will. The very essence of actions of the will, according to Hume, is that they are actions determined by motives. Finally, Hume argues:

I dare be positive no one will ever endeavor to refute these reasonings otherwise than by altering my definitions, and assigning different meanings to the terms cause and effect, and necessity, and liberty, and chance. According to my definitions, necessity makes an essential part of causation; and consequently liberty, by removing necessity . . . is the very same thing with chance. (T407)

Part Two: The Combat of Reason and the Passions.

Hume, having established the uniformity of actions of the will through their connection with motives, turns his analysis to 'the influencing motives of the will', in order to establish the causes and character of human action.

In a celebrated discussion Hume argues against reason as a motive to action, i. e., against a method of thinking on which "... the greatest part of moral philosophy ancient and modern seems to be founded ... the supposed pre-eminence of reason above the passions." (T413)³

³A substantial part of this argument has been included in Chapter I above, but since it is crucial to clarification of the 'motives of the will' it should be helpful to review it here.
Hume says:

I shall endeavor to prove first, that reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will; and secondly, that it can never oppose passion in the direction of the will.⁴ (T413)

Hume's use of 'motive' in this context is peculiar by contemporary standards. For Hume, a motive is a cause of voluntary human action, and, as the discussion below will indicate, a necessary condition for the occurrence of a motive is the occurrence of a desire. There are, of course, difficulties with this use of motive, but they are not difficulties with which this thesis need deal.

To return to Hume's argument against the so-called combat of reason and the passions, he argues, in support for the first premise that reason alone can never be a motive to any action: since the understanding only "... judges from demonstration or probability, ..." then the judgments of demonstrative or empirical reason must affect action. One point of clarification, reason, properly speaking, does not affect action. In other words, it is not the process of inquiry but rather the end product of inquiry, the judgments, which affect action. Thus, when Hume says that reason can have an influence on our conduct, he means, more properly, that judgments can have an influence on conduct. Throughout this chapter I will retain Hume's usage of 'reason' with the above clarification understood.

⁴Cf. Essays IV 162.
The substance of Hume's argument is as follows. Judgments, whether about causes and effects, about the nature and existence of objects, or about the abstract relations of our ideas, never affect action unless a particular acting agent, who is aware of these judgments, is so disposed to be interested in these judgments. For example, Hume argues: "It can never in the least concern us to know that such objects are causes, and such others effects, if both the causes and the effects be indifferent to us." (T414) In other words, since reason produces only judgments it cannot affect action unless the judgment supplies some information with which the acting agent is concerned. Consequently, the judgment, *per se*, cannot adequately explain why an action was produced.

In support for the second premise, that reason can never oppose a passion in the direction of the will, Hume argues: since the process of inquiry yields only empirical truth and falsity, and logical validity and invalidity, the only sense in which reason can be properly said to correct or oppose anything is when it corrects invalid or false judgments. Since, however, passions are neither copies, like empirical judgments, or conclusions of formal arguments, like demonstrative judgments, they are not correctable, respectively, as false or inconsistent. Hume argues, for example, regarding empirical judgments:

'Tis impossible, therefore, that this passion can be opposed by, or be contradictory to truth and reason;
(i. e., to empirical reason) since this contradiction consists in disagreement of ideas, considered as copies. . . . (T415)

In this context, Hume argues, in a well known passage, that: "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them." (T415) This passage must be understood as asserting that the term 'reason' is only correctly used to refer to the making of judgments and not to some principle which opposes the passions.

Norman Kemp Smith has read this passage as a normative claim about belief and reason.⁵ According to Smith, reason should not, or ought not, oppose the natural beliefs. Alfred Glathe has pointed out, correctly, that Hume never considered this passage as a normative claim about the relation between belief and reason; rather,⁶

Hume's point in this passage is that since reason is as a matter of fact, - and this is what his analysis has shown - the slave of the passions, the term reason is not to be used in discourse that claims to be strict and philosophical as if it were synonymous with the term, 'the principle which opposes our passions'. . . . ⁷

This interpretation is further justified in a statement by Hume in the conclusion of this paragraph. He says, "We speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk

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⁵Smith, pp. 45, 68, 388.


⁷Glathe, p. 10.
of the combat of reason and the passions." (T415) (Italics mine.)

Hume concludes this discussion by pointing out that since there is no sense to the talk of the combat of reason and the passions, then the key question for the general theory of action becomes: what are the influencing motives of the will, or, in more contemporary terms, what are the factors which explain voluntary action?

Part Three: The Influencing Motives of the Will.

According to Hume, all voluntary actions are explainable in terms of desires, and all desire arises from either the good 'considered simply', or from natural impulses which are perfectly unaccountable such as the "... desire of punishment to our enemies, and of happiness to our friends; hunger, lust, and a few other bodily appetites." (T439) As a secondary passion, desire always depends on prior acquaintance with particular pleasures.

8Curiously Hume never specifically says that all voluntary action is explained by desires though it is clear that this is what he means. His entire argument both in connecting all voluntary action to motives and in attacking the combat of reason and the passions thesis leads to his conclusion that no action is explainable without reference to desires.

9In this context 'considered simply' does not mean for 'good' or 'pleasure' per se, rather it means an appetite for pleasurable objects (i.e., acts, things, etc.) without reference to their relation to the particular desiring agent. In this context, 'considered simply' distinguishes desire from such passions as joy, where the good is considered in a particular relation to the agent, namely, probable.
and pains. In other words, desire for the good is desire for what has been experienced previously as good or pleasurable.

Of 'desire' and 'the will', Hume says:

Desire arises from good considered simply, and aversion is derived from evil. The will exerts itself, when either the good or the absence of evil may be attained by any action of the mind or body. 10

(T439)

Since, according to Hume, all passions are caused by ideas and since desire is a passion, the basic issues, therefore, in the analysis of desire as the influencing motive of the will are: (1) how are ideas presented? and, (2) how do ideas affect desires? Both of these questions will be answered in some detail in the next section. The purpose of the present section will be to explicate Hume's remarks on desire itself.

Hume's analysis of desire is quite brief. One would, in fact, wish that he had given a great deal more space to this topic. Hume's analysis of desire begins with an analysis of the calm desires, in order, as he puts it, to show the source of error in the 'supposed conflict of reason and the passions' thesis. Hume distinguishes "... certain calm desires and tendencies, which, tho' they be real passions, produce little emotion in the mind, ..." from "... certain violent passions of the same kind." (T417)

10 Cf. Essays IV 139.
Hume describes the calm desires:

These desires are of two kinds; either certain instincts originally implanted in our natures, such as benevolence and resentment, the love of life, and kindness to children, or the general appetite to good and aversion to evil, construct'd merely as such. (T417)

This definition is identical with the general definition of desire in the section on the direct passions. In fact, according to Hume, this definition applies, as well, to the violent desires. (T417)

Further, Hume says, "When any of these passions are calm, and cause no disorder in the soul, they are very readily taken for determinations of reason . . . [because reason too] exerts itself without producing any sensible emotion." (T417) Hume's analysis of the calm-violent desires distinction, however, goes far beyond merely accounting for the so-called combat between reason and the passions. In fact, Hume gives, as I will show, two distinct meanings to this concept.11

The first of these meanings is purely descriptive. Hume describes the calm desires in this sense as those desires which "... produce little emotion in the mind, and are more known by their effects than by their immediate feeling or sensation."12 (T417) They cause, Hume suggests further, "... no disorder in the soul, [and] are readily


12 Note, by 'effect' Hume means the action and not the force or vivacity of the emotion.
taken for the determinations of reason. . . ." (T417)

A violent desire, in this sense, is a desire which causes great emotion in the mind; the violent desires are the 'passions vulgarly so-called'. This sense of 'calm' and 'violent' is descriptive of the force and vivacity of the feeling quality, and it is this sense which explains, as discussed above, the so-called combat between reason and the passions.

Hume does not, however, leave the matter here. He goes on to treat this concept in a second sense. In this sense, the attribution of calmness or violence refers to the source of the 'feeling' quality in sense one above. In this sense, to be determined by a calm desire is to be determined either by an habitual desire, i. e., "... a settled principle of action, . . ." (T419) or by a desire directed by reason, i. e., "... founded on some distant view or reflexion." (T583) In this sense, the calm desires are directed by reflective judgments and are distinguished from the violent desires which are determined by the immediate unreflective contemplation of their objects. A violent desire, in this sense, is an immediate unreflective emotional response by the acting agent to his environment; often caused, Hume suggests, by the immediacy of the object, by the opposition to immediate desire, or by anxiety. (T418-22)

It is clear that Hume did not carefully distin-
guish these two senses of calm and violent desires, though
his use of each sense seems to be quite distinct.

This analysis leads Hume to another distinction.

He asks, which desires in sense two are dominant?

There is not in philosophy a subject of more nice
speculation than this, of the different causes and
effects of the calm and violent passions. "Tis
evident passions influence not the will in proportion
to their violence. . . . We must, therefore, distinguish
betwixt a calm and a weak passion; betwixt a violent
and a strong one. (T418-9)

According to this distinction, the strong or dominant de-
sires are not necessarily either violent or calm, and, simi-
larly, the weak or dominated desires are not necessarily
either violent or calm. Which, then, of the desires in
sense two will be strong? Hume says:

In general we may observe, that both these principles
operate on the will; and where they are contrary,
that either of them prevails, according to the gen-
eral character or present dispositions of the person.
(T418)

This point is clear. Since, "There is no man so constantly
possessed of this virtue (prevalence of calm over violent
desires) as never on any occasion to yield to the solicita-
tions of passion and desire [to the violent desires],"
(T418) then the variation in dominance of the calm and vi-
olen desires is explained as a variation in the 'general
character or present disposition of the particular agent'.

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13 Laing has misunderstood Hume's analysis of the calm
and violent passions. He says: "The conflict [so-called be-
tween reason and the passions] is always between passions and
desires of one kind and passions and desires of another kind.
The violent passions have the most influence on conduct; and
In other words, if an agent is so disposed in a particular circumstance to follow the dictates of reason then the calm desires will be strong. That a particular desire is strong will be explained by reference to the particular present dispositions and circumstances of the particular acting agent; and the character of the particular action caused, will, if the desire is calm (in sense two), in part, be determined by the directive judgments of reason. More on this in the next section.

We can now see that a particular judgment, a particular piece of information, affects action when it affects the dispositions of the agent in question. The question, therefore, of what sorts of dispositions man has becomes crucial.

Hume held that man had two distinct groups of dispositions, those which he describes as limitedly benevolent and those of self-interest. The former type of dispositions are manifest in desires for the happiness of friends and the care of children; of the latter type are all the bodily appetites and the desire for good and aversion to evil.

All the dispositions manifest desires which, as secondary psychologically what is important is the considerations of the factors that affect the strength or desire of passion. (Leing, p. 177.) (Italics mine.) This analysis is misleading because the strength of the desire depends in large measure on the character of the particular agent. Properly speaking, a violent passion need not necessarily be strong. A properly trained man will act in accordance with the calm rather than the violent passions.
passions, depend on precedent experience of pleasure and pain. Thus, the desire for food, caused by hunger, is in part determined by the knowledge that food satisfies hunger. Since each agent desires what he thinks is in his or his family's or friends' best interest; and since each agent's desires will, to some greater or lesser degree, be directed by his judgments, then the quality and character of a particular agent's action will clearly be determined, (1) by his present circumstances, (2) by the extent and character of his previous experience, and (3) by the judgments he makes to direct his desires.

Regarding experience as a determining factor in a particular agent's action, Hume is quick to point out that most men act, most of the time, in accordance with the training and experience which their environment (such as parents, teachers, politicians, etc.) has provided. 14 He says, for example:

... as parents easily observe, that a man is the more useful, both to himself and others, the greater degree of probity and honor he is endow'd with; and that those principles have greater force, when custom and education assist: interest and reflexion: For these reasons they are induc'd to inculcate on their children, from their earliest infancy, the principles of probity ... (T500)

Regarding reason as a determining factor in a particular agent's action, Hume points out that man has, through reason, a potential to extremely complex and sophisticated action. (T484) More on this in Part Four below.

14EII214.
Before we leave this section, two important points should be made.

First, Hume was not primarily concerned with the calm desires in sense two, as a consequence, he gives no analysis of such related problems as: the character and limits of an information base, the criteria for determining the correct choice of long run ends and goals, the measurement of undesirable side effects of particular choices of means, etc. This, of course, makes his general analysis of action somewhat incomplete, though incomplete in a way with which this thesis need not be concerned.

Second, and more importantly, Hume never analyzes the source of reasoning itself. This would seem a curious omission since reasoning, or the process of inquiry, is a kind of action, it would seem, therefore, that it too demands precedent desires. That Hume held the view that reason is controlled by the passions is obvious from his view that reason is, at best, only a mediate cause of action. To be consistent, Hume would have to hold that reasoning is caused by desire.

It would, I think, not be unreasonable to assert that implicit in Hume's analysis of human action there is a presumption in favor of the view that the desire to reason is a function of a broad natural human disposition. This is not to say that Hume ever explicitly put forward such a view; but this view would not be incompatible with
his overall view. There are, in fact, two places where
Hume refers to the reasoning process as natural which might
be considered in support of such an interpretation.

First, Hume says, in the context of his analysis of
the foundation of civil society, that:

Mankind is an inventive species; and where an inven-
tion is obvious and absolutely necessary, it may as
properly be said to be as natural as anything that
proceeds immediately from original principles, with-
out the intervention of thought or reflexion.\textsuperscript{15} (T484)

An explicit implication of this statement is that 'thought
and reflection' are, like acting kindly toward children, a
manifestation of natural human dispositions. Inquiry, he
says, can "... properly be said to be as natural as any-
thing [i.e., any action] proceeding from original principles
[i.e., natural dispositions] ..."

Second, in the last section of Book One Hume os-
cillates between being, "... ready to throw all my books
and papers into the fire, and resolve never more to renounce
the pleasures of life for the sake of reasoning and philo-
sophy," (T269) and "... having a curiosity to be acquainted
with the principles of moral good and evil, the nature and
foundation of government, ..." (T270-1) an oscillation
between doing philosophy and not doing philosophy.\textsuperscript{16} But, he says:

These sentiments spring up naturally in my present

\textsuperscript{15}EII307.

\textsuperscript{16}J. O. Nelson, "The Conclusion of Book One, Part
Four, of Hume's Treatise," *Philosophy and Phenomenological
Research* XXIV (1963-64), 512ff.
disposition; and shou'd I endeavor to banish them, by attaching myself to any other business or diversion I feel I shou'd be the loser in the point of pleasure; and this is the origine of my philosophy. (T271)

The implication of these statements is that it is even possible to desire inquiry for its own sake, i. e., for the pure pleasure of the inquiry.

These two passages support, in some degree, the interpretation of 'inquiry' above as explainable by reference to a natural human disposition, but it should be clear that this interpretation does constitute an emendation. As additional support for this interpretation, however, it should be noted that in spite of the fact that Hume did not recognize that his analysis of reason was deficient in this respect, he treats reason consistently throughout his discussion as if it were the product of a broad natural disposition, and he consequently grants to reason, as the next section will show, an enormous and extensive influence on action.

Part Four: Reason and Action.

Protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, Hume allows reason to be, as John Laird has put it, 'more like an astute family solicitor than an ordinary sort of slave'.17 The purpose of this section is to clarify precisely the influence of reason on action.

Since, according to Hume, "The understanding exerts

17Laird, p. 204.
itself after two ways, as it judges from demonstration or probability, . . ." (T413) the question of the relation of reason to action is more specifically the question of the effect of demonstrative and empirical judgments on action. Further, since," . . . reason, in the strict and philosophical sense, can have an influence on our conduct only after two ways: Either when it excites a passion by informing us of the existence of something which is a proper object of it; or when it discovers the connexion of causes and effects, so as to afford us a means of ex- eriting any passion," (T459) then the question of the relation of reason to action is more properly the question of how demonstrative and empirical judgments prompt and direct action. 18 Significantly, this analysis is consistent with Hume's analysis of desire, as discussed above, for reason prompts and directs desires only when it affects the dispo- sitions and desires of the particular acting agent. Precisely how, then, does reason affect the desires?

Consider first the effects of promptive empirical judgments. Empirical reason, in this sense, may affect action, " . . . when it excites a passion by informing us of the existence of something which is the proper object of it." (T459) This argument might seem inconsistent with Hume's argument (p. 57 above) that reason cannot be a mo- tive to the will. In fact, however, if we remember that

18 EI1285, 293.
insofar as reason regulates the ideas of possible objects of desire before the mind then reason, to this extent, prompts desires and not action.\textsuperscript{19} That a particular judgment affects a particular acting agent depends, as we have pointed out above, on the particular disposition of that agent. Consider the following example: the judgment, 'here is a bottle of whiskey', may, if the agent who so reasons is disposed to desire and drink whiskey, prompt those desires and, \textit{ceteris paribus}, cause an action. The judgment, 'here is a bottle of whiskey', affects action by prompting the agent to act in drinking whiskey though the agent had no previous conscious desire to drink whiskey.\textsuperscript{20} That the agent drinks whiskey is ultimately explained by the agent's disposition to drink whiskey when the occasion arises, and by his awareness that the occasion has arisen. The judgment which makes the agent aware of the availability and existence of whiskey prompts him to action, though he would not act unless he were the sort of person who is effected by such judgments. Here Hume's explicit analysis of promptive empirical judgments ends.

In summary, Hume allows that certain judgments about the existence of objects, or the existence of objects of a particular type, may, if the agent is properly dis-

\textsuperscript{19} Kydd, p. 107.

\textsuperscript{20} See Kydd's excellent analysis of this point, pp. 104-107.
posed, cause the agent to desire and/or act toward the object.

Concerning directive empirical or means-ends judgments Hume is somewhat more explicit. He notes that, "... empirical reason directs action when it discovers the connexion of causes and effects so as to afford us a means of exerting any passion." (T459) The precondition for directing or means-ends judgments having an effect on action is, of course, the existence of desires to be directed. Thus, given a desire to use the lighter which is across the room, the judgment that I must cross the room to get the lighter in order to use it, clearly directs my desire (for the lighter) toward an action (crossing the room). Crossing the room is the means to the end. The primary cause of the action is the desire to use the lighter, the judgment merely directs the desire to its fulfillment. This judgment, in fact, can only affect the agent's action so long as he has a precedent desire for the use of the lighter. As Hume says:

It can never in the least concern us to know, that such objects are causes, and such others effects, if both the causes and the effects be indifferent to us. (T414)

Here Hume's explicit analysis of directive empirical judgments ends.

In summary, Hume allows that certain judgments about means and ends affect action when, ceteris paribus, those ends are previously desired.
Regarding the effect of demonstrative reason on action Hume is very brief; in fact, this discussion amounts to less than one paragraph.\textsuperscript{21} In an argument directed at the rationalists, Hume says:

\begin{quote}
Mathematics, indeed, are useful in all mechanical operations, and arithmetic in almost every art and profession: \textit{But 'tis not of themselves they have any influence.} \textsuperscript{(T413)}(Italics mine.)
\end{quote}

In other words, though demonstrative judgments (e.g., mathematical judgments) sometimes affect action they do not, by themselves, cause action. In fact, says Hume, "Abstract or demonstrative reasoning . . . never influences any of our actions, but only as it directs our judgments concerning causes and effects . . . ." \textsuperscript{(T414)} Hume's introduction of this indirect influence of demonstrative reason on action is meant primarily as a qualification of his strong assertion that demonstrative reason does not affect action.\textsuperscript{22} Demonstrative judgments do affect action but only indirectly. Hume gives an example:

\begin{quote}
A merchant is desirous of knowing the sum total of his accounts with any person: Why? but that he may learn what sum will have the same effects in paying his debt, and going to market, as all the particular articles taken together. \textsuperscript{(T414)}
\end{quote}

The example is clear. Insofar as the merchant wishes to pay his debts, and insofar as he judges that part of the means to the end of paying his debts is knowing the sum

\textsuperscript{21}This argument was discussed briefly in Chapter I, pages 7-9.

\textsuperscript{22}Kydd, p. 62.
of his debts, then the summation of his debts constitutes an action prompted by an empirical directive judgment, concluding in a demonstrative judgment, which will indirectly have an effect on the actual exchange of money. It is in this sense that it is proper to say that demonstrative judgments, "... direct our judgments concerning causes and effects." Here Hume's explicit analysis of the effect of demonstrative judgments on action ends. It is, I think, clear that Hume's argument, though brief, allows rather wide range of demonstrative judgments to affect action. For example, Kydd has suggested judgments of the class-member, genus-species, and constituent-process type. Thus, for example, my judgment that (1) I desire a piece of candy, and (2) this gumdrop is a piece of candy, yields (3) I desire this gumdrop. This judgment is similar to the merchant example insofar as the merchant's specification of 'his debts' as, say, '$150' is similar to the specification of 'a piece of candy' as 'this gumdrop'.

One very important note, Rachael Kydd, in her analysis of Hume's conception of reason and action, alleges that Hume should have admitted the existence of what she calls 'practical' judgments. She says by way of a definition of these judgments:

... I shall refer to judgments whose practical effect is essential- a necessary consequence of their form- as practical judgments, ... 24

23Kydd, pp. 85ff.

24Kydd, p. 71.
Since Mrs. Kydd's analysis is wrong in a significant way, and since it will be useful to discuss her error by way of emphasizing Hume's own view, the remainder of this section will deal with her argument.

Kydd insists that there are propositions like 'I desire this gumdrop' which are conclusions of arguments like:

I desire a piece of candy.
This gumdrop is a piece of candy.
Therefore, I desire this gumdrop.

which must, as a necessary consequence of the form of the argument, affect desires. In defense of this view she says:

For in verifying the proposition I cause myself to come into the very state of desiring that which the proposition asserts I should desire on reflection; if I did not I could not assent to the proposition as true. . . . The practical effect of such judgments is then essential and not merely incidental to them.\(^{25}\)

One point of clarification. The truth of a proposition is distinct from its validity as the conclusion of the syllogism. Consequently, the truth of the proposition 'I desire this gumdrop' is distinct from its validity as the conclusion of the syllogism.

What, then, does Kydd mean when she says, "... in verifying the proposition I cause myself to come into the very state of desiring that which the proposition asserts I should desire. . . ." If by 'verifying' she is referring to the discovery of the truth of the proposition, then this assertion is false, for being able to discover the truth of a proposition depends on whether what the proposition asserts

\(^{25}\)Kydd, pp. 71-2.
is true, is, as a matter of fact, already true, prior to the inquiry which verifies it. Thus the verification process does not cause the truth of the proposition which it verifies, it only discovers its truth.

Kydd, must, therefore, mean by 'verifying' the discovery of the validity of the proposition as the conclusion of the syllogism. In other words, she must mean that if I discover the validity of the proposition, I will come to understand that my desire for candy is more specifically a desire for this gumdrop, and I, consequently, will come to desire this gumdrop. But this interpretation is inconsistent with the last part of the sentence which states, "... if I did not I could not assent to the proposition as true. ..." For, to say that if I did not (come into the state of desiring this gumdrop) I could not assent to the proposition as true (i.e., valid) would then be false, because I may not come into a state of desiring this gumdrop though I would assent to the validity of the syllogism.

It is clear that Kydd fails to distinguish the validity of the proposition as the conclusion of a syllogism from the truth of the proposition (which, as a matter of fact might have been caused by the recognition of the validity of the proposition). Whether a particular argument affects action depends, according to Hume, on whether the judgment is considered true by the agent, and whether the agent is concerned about the information available in the judgment.
Kydd's insistence that, "... the making of judgments about what I really desire, or what I must desire on reflection must by its very nature affect me whose desires it is about," is on Hume's view false. The making of a judgment affects action, according to Hume, not essentially but only incidentally insofar as it affects the desires of a particular agent. Kydd's argument fails to show how, consistent with Hume's insistence that all judgments affect action only insofar as they excite or direct desires, it is possible to make judgments, "... whose practical effect is essential - a necessary consequence of their form." All judgments, and this is a very important point for Hume, affect actions only insofar as they regulate the ideas before the mind, i.e., direct or prompt desires, and it is nonsensical to assert that any judgment must, by virtue of its form, necessarily affect action.

The truth or validity of a judgment affects action only insofar as that truth or validity is recognized as such (whether it is in fact true or not) and only insofar as the acting agent's desires are effected by the information presented in the judgment. In this sense, the effect of a judgment is an issue separate from the question of its truth or validity. Part of Hume's point in his analysis of reason and action is to deny the existence of 'practical' judgments in Kydd's sense of this term.

We are now in a position to summarize Hume's explicit

26Kydd, p. 70.
statement of the relation of reason to action. Demonstrative reason affects action mediately by directing causal reasoning. Empirical reason affects action by defining the means to particular ends or by discovering the existence of objects which are, to a particular agent, desirable precedent to a conscious desire for these objects. Hume's explicit analysis of reason and action (i.e., the calm desires) is, as the above discussion indicates, rather limited in detail. Hume's analysis of reason and action is, however, considerably expanded implicitly in his analysis of justice and the natural obligations. This is the subject of the next section.

Part Five: Desires and the Natural Obligations.

Hume's purpose in his introduction of the concept of natural obligation is to distinguish actions in compliance with the rules of society (or other similar actions), actions which appear to be contrary to the natural desires, from actions which appear to be in accordance with the natural desires. Speaking specifically of the apparent conflict between the natural desire for self-gratification and honesty Hume says:

\[ \ldots \text{'tis certain that self-love, when it acts at its liberty, instead of engaging us to honest actions, [i.e., actions in accordance with the rules of society] is the source of all injustice and violence; \ldots}. \] (T480)

Man acts in accordance with the rules of society because these rules define the actions which rectify the inconveniences of his environment. These rules, are, according
to Hume,

... not deriv'd from nature, but from artifice; or more properly speaking, nature provides the remedy in the judgment and the understanding, for what is irregular and incommmodious in the affections. (T489)

In fact, Hume insists, we should in vain "... expect to find, in uncalltivated nature, a remedy to this inconvenience; ..." (T488) The system of rules which remedy the inconveniences of man's environment (and establish society) provide what Hume calls the natural obligations. Action in accordance with these rules is, according to Hume, prudent action.

There is one important function of the natural obligations with which this thesis is concerned, viz., the natural obligations, stated in directive judgments, function by stating what action is prudent given man's natural environment, desires, and dispositions.

One point of clarification, Hume's reference here to 'natural' is not either a reference to a fixed natural environment or a fixed teleological theory of human nature. Quite to the contrary, Hume means it to refer to an empirical description of a contingent state of affairs. In fact, Hume saw this contingency as one of the significant features of his theory. Precisely because the natural obligations are based on a contingent state of affairs they are obligations only insofar as that state of affairs obtains. As he points out concerning the natural obligation to just action:
Increase to a sufficient degree the benevolence of men, or the bounty of nature, and you render justice useless, by supplying its place with much nobler virtues, and more valuable blessings. 27 (T494-5)

The implication of this passage is clear. If the contingent conditions on which the natural obligations are based do not obtain then neither do the natural obligations obtain. This is not, however, as Hume points out, to deny that the natural obligations function in a way similar to the classical conception of natural law. In fact, Hume recognizes their functional similarity when he says:

Mankind is an inventive species; and where an invention is obvious and absolutely necessary, it may as properly be said to be natural as anything that proceeds immediately from original principles; without the intervention of thought or reflection. Tho' the rules of justice be artificial, they are not arbitrary. Nor is the expression improper to call them Laws of Nature; if by natural we understand what is common to any species, or even if we confine it to mean what is inseparable from the species. (T484)

How, then, do the natural obligations function? According to Hume, they function by stating that a particular action or type of action is (given the environment, etc.) a prudent action. They function, in other words, to state that a particular action is consistent with, what I have called, the pattern of prudent behavior. They state, in other words, that if certain ends are desired then certain means ought to be adopted because these are the means deemed prudent. Deny the desire for the ends and the obligation statement has no function; deny that the particular

27 EII 184-5.
means recommended are prudent and the obligation statement is false (though a genuine natural obligation is, of course, not false). This leads to the second salient feature of natural obligation judgments.

Since the natural obligation judgments define a pattern of behavior within the contingent limits and direction of man's capacities in a particular environment, they function to prompt and direct human action. Since it is part of their purpose to prompt and direct human action, they are naturally congruent with, and appeal to, the natural human desires and dispositions. This does not, however, mean that the recognition or awareness by a particular agent of his natural obligations will necessarily cause action in accordance with those obligations. In other words, though the natural obligations refer to a pattern of behavior which is deemed prudent by most or all men in this particular circumstance, this does not mean that any particular agent will be disposed to act in accordance with that pattern. The natural obligations, by presenting ideas or data to the mind, affect action, like all data presented to the mind, insofar as they prompt or direct the desires. This is not to say that the natural obligations cannot significantly affect action. In fact, insofar as they appeal to the natural dispositions and desires, their potential effect on human action is very great.

Hume's introduction of the concept of natural obligation is consistent with his analysis of directive empir-
ical reason. It would, in fact, be fair to say that propositions stating the natural obligations are simply very sophisticated directive empirical judgments. These natural obligations provide, in effect, the guidelines for rational behavior, given man's capacities and the environment in which he lives. The natural obligations, defined by reason, suggest, in effect, constraint on the impulsive desires for immediate 'goods' in favor of their accomplishment in the long run. This does not, however, mean that reason is opposing the passions. Hume says:

Nor is such a restraint contrary to these passions; for if so, it cou'd never be enter'd into, or main-tain'd; but it is only contrary to their heedless and impetuous movement. Instead of departing from our own interest, or from that of our nearest friends, . . . we cannot better consult both these interests, than by such a convention; because it is by that means we maintain society, which is so necessary to their well being and subsistence, as well as our own. (T489)

Thus, for example, justice is a natural obligation for man, defined by the rules of society, which are, in turn, established by directive empirical reasoning trying to find the best means of accomplishing the goal of a stable society. The obligation to justice is natural in the sense that if the acting agent desires to live in society in order to remedy the inconveniences of nature, then he should (i. e., has an obligation to) act justly. If, however, the cir-

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28 Hume notes at the conclusion of his analysis of the origin of justice that "... the natural obligation to justice, viz., interest, has been fully explained." (T498)

29 I. Hedenius has completely missed this point. He says, "Thus Hume is not unfamiliar with the idea that the
cumstances of man's environment were, in this regard, to change, then similarly his natural obligations to act justly would also change. 30 The sense of obligation, or acting against the natural desires, is merely the sense of acting against the blind and impetuous motions of the desires.

In summary, we can see that implicitly at least, Hume allows reason to significantly affect action by directing and prompting the desires to manifest extremely sophisticated and complex action. This, of course, does not mean that reason alone is a motive to actions of the will, though it should be clear that an adequate explanation of action in accordance with the natural obligations would necessarily demand considerable analysis of the judgments which define these obligations.

individual, when participating in the original convention for the establishment of the rules of justice, intended to promote public interest . . . indeed, in the essay "Of the Original Contract", Hume says speaking of the artificial virtue of 'allegiance' that, 'It is reflection only which engages us to sacrifice such strong passions to the interest of peace and public order.' When the idea that the original convention was prompted by public benevolence in the individuals who participated in it thus finds its way into Hume's theory, this implies an obvious internal contradiction in the theory." (Hedenius, p. 440) In other words, Hedenius has asserted that in acting for the public interest man is acting in a manner inconsistent with Hume's general thesis that man's generosity is confined. Hedenius fails to see that action in accordance with the natural obligations is motivated by a directed sense of self-interest, though it is incidentally also in the public interest.

30 Hume says: "Increase to a sufficient degree the benevolence of man or the bounty of nature and you render justice useless. . . ." (T495)
Conclusion.

In order that the next chapter can deal more specifically with the problem of how moral judgments affect action, the present chapter has been concerned with the question of how, according to Hume, judgments in general affect action. This chapter has shown that, according to Hume, all voluntary action can be explained by reference to certain basic human dispositions which manifest particular desires when appropriate ideas are presented, together in some cases with certain judgments which direct fulfillment of those desires. Further, this chapter has shown that Hume's basic purpose in his analysis of these various factors was to show that reason alone never provides a motive to action; and, consequently, that particular judgments cannot serve, without reference to the desires which they direct or the dispositions which they prompt, to explain action. It will be the purpose of the next chapter to show what effect the analysis has on Hume's conception of moral obligation.
CHAPTER IV
MORAL OBLIGATION I.

Introduction.
According to Hume, the problem of moral obligation is the problem of the consistency of a particular morally significant token act with an established and recognized morally significant type act or pattern of behavior. The primary purposes of Hume's analysis of moral obligation are, (1) to show that significant segments of the established patterns of behavior which are considered moral are artificial patterns established by directive empirical judgments about the necessity for and of certain types of intersocial behavior; (2) to show that the moral significance which these patterns of behavior have is an acquired characteristic; (3) to show that actions consciously in accordance with these established patterns of artificial moral behavior or patterns of natural moral behavior are actions motivated by a sense of duty, traditionally called moral obligations; and (4) to show that the motives, dispositions, and desires which cause these dutiful actions are constituted by a conjunction of natural, experiential and environmental forces. In order to introduce these problems perhaps some review of the main thesis of the preced-
ing two chapters would be helpful.

It was the purpose of Chapter II to show that Hume's theory of moral approval is a theory which describes empirically the psychological process through which human beings come to morally approve and disapprove certain actions and motives. A theory of moral approval was seen as a detailed description of a psychological process and not primarily as a normative inquiry. The two important conclusions of Hume's analysis, discussed in this chapter, are, (1) that moral approval is a natural manifestation of a natural principle of human nature, viz., sympathy; and (2) that the questions of normative ethics are questions about the occurrence of non-sympathetic pleasure and pain in the world.

It was the purpose of Chapter III to show that all voluntary action can be explained by reference to certain basic human dispositions which manifest particular desires when appropriate ideas are presented. Further, it was the purpose of this chapter to show that reason alone (i.e., judgments alone) never provide a motive to action, i.e., that no piece of information, no ideas, ever necessarily affect action.

The problem of the present chapter should be clear. Insofar as moral sentiments or judgments present ideas to the mind, how and to what extent do these ideas affect action? This is, for Hume, the problem of moral obligation.
Part One: The Artificial and Natural Virtues.

Virtuous Acts or Virtuous Motives?

Hume's analysis of the distinction between the natural and artificial virtues is perhaps one of the most significant features of his moral theory. This analysis serves, in part, the purpose of distinguishing moral action motivated by natural instincts from action motivated initially by directed self-interest which comes to acquire moral significance and secondary moral motives to its occurrence.

Hume's analysis of the natural and artificial virtues begins with one of the most difficult arguments in all of his work. This argument is, as Hume states it, both inconsistent with his later analysis and untenable. It will be discussed in the following manner: First, the argument itself will be stated and discussed in order that its point is made clear; second, two significant difficulties with the argument will be pointed out in order to show that the argument, as stated, is untenable; third, an attenuated sense of the argument will be suggested which both avoids the difficulties of, what I will call, the strong argument, and serves the purpose which Hume wanted the argument to serve; and fourth, it will be shown that Hume accepted the attenuated sense of the argument.

Hume argues first:

'Tis evident that when we praise any actions, we regard only the motive that produc'd them, and coa-
consider the actions as signs or indications of certain principles in the mind and temper. The external performance has no merit. We must look to find the moral quality. (T477)

His point is clear. It is not the action, but the motive which produces the action which is judged moral. Properly speaking, Hume says, it is the intention of the acting agent which is judged moral. In support for this point, Hume argues:

... when we require any action, or blame any person for not performing it, we always suppose, that one in that situation shou'd be influenc'd by the proper motive of that action, and we esteem it vicious in him to be regardless of it. If we find, upon inquiry, that the virtuous motive is still powerful over his breast, tho' checked in its operation by some circumstance unknown to us, we retract our blame, and have the same esteem for him, as if he had actually perform'd the action, which we require of him. (T477-8)

In other words, we do not blame a man of good intentions if his action goes awry through circumstances beyond his control. Then Hume argues, and this is the key point in his argument:

It appears, therefore, that all actions derive their merit only from virtuous motives, and are consider'd merely as signs of those motives. From this principle I conclude, that the first virtuous motive, which bestows merit on any action, can never be a regard to the virtue of that action, but must be some other natural motive or principle. To suppose, that the mere regard to the virtue of the action, may be the first motive, which produc'd the action, and render'd it virtuous, is to reason in a circle. Before we can have such a regard, the action must be really virtuous; and this virtue must be deriv'd from some virtuous motive: And consequently the virtuous motive must be different from the regard to the virtue of the action. A virtuous motive is requisite to render an action virtuous. An action must be virtuous, before we can have a regard to its virtue. Some virtuous motive, therefore, must be antecedent to that regard. (T478)
Hume's point can be somewhat more simply stated. If we accept the premise that properly speaking motives not actions are virtuous, because actions are merely signs of their motives then we must accept the assertion that, "... the first virtuous motive, which bestows merit on any action can never be a regard to the virtue of that action but must be some other natural motive or principle." To deny the latter assertion entails either a denial of the premise that motives not actions are virtuous or to reason in a circle. Consider:

Assume (1) Virtuous actions derive their merit only from virtuous motives.

Assume (2) The first virtuous motive is a regard to the virtue of the action. (Denial of the argument.)

Then (3) The first virtuous motive is a regard to the virtue of the action, i.e., is a regard to the first virtuous motive.

In more common terms, the argument states that since the virtuousness of act 'x' always depends on the virtuousness of the motive which produced it, any motive to 'x' could not have come to be considered virtuous until a virtuous motive to 'x' had existed. Hume is not saying that 'x' can't be done after its initial occurrence from a sense of its morality; rather he is saying that it must have (1) been done precedent to the sense of its moral worth, and (2) been morally worthwhile, in order that it could attain or be understood as having moral worth. In other words, precedent to a regard for its moral worth
the first motive must have moral worth.

There are two significant difficulties with this argument if it is accepted as it is stated by Hume. First, and most obviously, no meaningful sense of moral obligation is possible. Consider, on this analysis what can a statement of the form 'x has a moral obligation to do y' mean? Given Hume's argument this statement must mean 'x has a moral obligation to have a motive z to perform action y'. In other words, on this view 'x' is not obliged simply to perform 'y' but to perform 'y' from a particular motive. It is difficult to imagine, however, how it is possible for 'x' to have a motive, which as a matter of fact he doesn't have, and similarly it is more difficult to imagine what it means to say that he is morally obliged to have motives he doesn't have. In fact, on Hume's own analysis in the discussion of promise keeping (See pp. 108ff, below), it is impossible to will a sentiment or feeling, which is a necessary condition, according to Hume, for having a motive. Hume says:

But 'tis certain we can naturally no more change our own sentiments, than the motions of the heavens: nor by a single act of our will, . . . render any action agreeable or disagreeable, moral or immoral. (T517)

Thus by Hume's own analysis it is implausible to say that a man can voluntarily cause himself to have a particular motive, consequently it would be implausible to assert that he is obliged to have such a motive.
The second difficulty is with the first premise. That premise states that 'virtuous actions derive their merit only from virtuous motives'. There are, I suggest, significant senses in which acts may properly be spoken of as virtuous irrespective of their motive. In fact, Hume's own analysis of moral approval allows moral approval of actions in view of their consequences, i.e., in view of the non-sympathetic pleasures or pains caused by the actions. On this view it would be proper to speak of the virtuous consequences of action, of virtuous actions, and of virtuous persons or motives. Frequently, I suspect, we ascribe morality to an action insofar as it has the requisite consequences though we are wholly, or for the most part, unaware of the motive which produced it. I might, for example, say that the action, 'giving money to an orphanage' is virtuous insofar as it has non-sympathetic pleasure as a consequence; and I might say that this sort of action is moral though this act was initially performed by agent A from a desire to seduce the director of the orphanage. A's motive, 'giving money to the orphanage in order to ingratiating himself with and ultimately seduce the director', would, insofar as it would bring about non-sympathetic pain in the world, be considered vicious though the means to the action 'giving money to the orphanage' insofar as it would bring about non-sympathetic pleasure in the world would be considered virtuous. It would, therefore, be possible to recommend this action as
virtuous on its own merit, notwithstanding its original vicious motive.

Before an attenuated sense of the argument is suggested the two purposes which this argument serves in Hume's analysis should be discussed. Hume puts forward this argument in order first, to show that, properly speaking, a man is virtuous only when he has virtuous motives. In other words a man is not virtuous because his actions accidentally bring pleasure in the world, and a man is virtuous if his motives are good though unfulfilled in action. The second, and more important purpose which this argument serves is to point out that before any action can come to be regarded as virtuous there must be some natural motive to this action whether moral or non-moral. A precondition for an action being called moral is that it must have occurred (or at least a similar type of action must have occurred) in order that its virtuous consequences can be established. Hume introduces this argument at the beginning of the section which questions whether justice is a natural or artificial virtue and his purpose is to show (1) that the first motives to just action are non-moral motives of directed self-interest, (2) that the moral significance of justice is recognized secondarily, and (3) that the first virtuous motive to just action is a secondary, hence artificial, motive of regard to the virtuous consequences of such action.
In view of the difficulties suggested above, and the purposes which the argument is supposed to serve, I would suggest that the first premise of the argument be modified to read that 'a man, properly speaking, is virtuous only when his motives are virtuous'. The argument would then state that precedent to any action being performed from a motive of regard to its virtuousness there must have been a natural motive to that action whether moral or non-moral in order that the moral significance of the action could have been recognized; and consequently it would be impossible to assert that the first motive to any act with virtuous consequences can have been a regard to those virtuous consequences.

This attenuated sense of the argument avoids the difficulties I have suggested above by the admission that actions have moral significance, and further, it fulfills Hume's two purposes in stating the argument by allowing that a man is moral only when his motives are moral, and by allowing that a regard to the morality of an action is always a secondary motive to that action.

Oddly, Hume never accepted this argument in the form in which he stated it. In fact his entire subsequent analysis of 'the acquisition of moral significance by the so-called artificial virtues', of 'the duty to perform acts of limited benevolence', and of 'moral obligations' is (1) implicitly a denial of the first premise that virtuous
actions derive their merit only from virtuous motives, and (2) implicitly an acceptance of the attenuated sense of the argument. I will consider only the analysis of 'the obligation to perform acts of natural benevolence' here, in order to show how, and to what extent, Hume denied the first premise and the strong argument. The subsequent analysis in this chapter of the artificial virtues and moral obligation will verify that Hume accepted the attenuated argument.¹

Less than five paragraphs after the completion of the argument, Hume says:

When any virtuous motive or principle is common in human nature, a person, who feels his heart devoid of that motive, may hate himself upon that account, and may perform the action without the motive, from a certain sense of duty, in order to acquire by practice, that virtuous principle, or at least, to disguise to himself, as much as possible, his want of it. A man that really feels no gratitude in his temper, is still pleas'd to perform grateful actions, and thinks he has, by that means, fulfill'd his duty. Actions are at first only consider'd as signs of motives: But 'tis usual, in this case, as in all others, to fix our attention on the signs, and neglect, in some measure, the thing signify'd. But tho', on some occasions, a person may perform an action merely out of regard to its moral obligation, yet still this supposes in human nature some distinct principles, which are capable of producing the action, and whose moral beauty renders the action meritorious. (T479)(Italics mine.)

Hume's point here is clear. Insofar as a particular action is common to human nature, such as kindness to children, is, in other words, instinctive, and insofar as some agent approves of such action though he finds in his own

¹See below respectively pp. 109-115.
breast no disposition to such action, he may act kindly toward children, and his motive may consequently be approved, in spite of the absence of the specific instinctive motive to act kindly toward children. Moreover, to be consistent with his analysis of moral approval as discussed in Chapter Two above this must mean that the motive is regarded as virtuous because the action which it causes is productive of non-sympathetic pleasure in the world. But what then is this secondary motive which produces an act of kindness to children? Hume tells us that it is an action 'from a certain sense of duty' or an action 'merely out of a regard to its moral obligation'; it is, in other words, an action which is motivated by a 'regard to the virtuousness of the action'. Hume is quite clear on this point, "Actions are at first only considered as signs of motives: but 'tis usual in this case as in all others to fix our attention on the signs and neglect in some measure the thing signified." This must mean that a regard to the virtuous consequences of the act (which is the sign of a neglected and presumably virtuous motive) is the secondary motive to this action. To put this point another way, the original action was considered virtuous, in spite of a lack of knowledge about its motive, because it had virtuous consequences, hence the new secondary motive to this action as Hume says 'from a sense of duty' would have to be a regard to the virtuousness of the class of acts of which the motive to the first
recognized member is unknown. In other words, the new motive, is a regard to the virtuousness of the act, irrespective of its original motive.

Consider again the 'orphanage' example. In spite of the fact that the first motive to the action of giving money to an orphanage might have been a desire to seduce the director of the orphanage, the recognition by any actor of the positive moral significance of the action itself might be sufficient to produce a first, virtuous motive to that action which would be a regard to the positive moral significance of the action. This is a denial of the conclusion of the argument that the first virtuous motive to an action can never be a regard to the virtuousness of the action. How then does Hume's analysis of the duty to perform limitedly benevolent acts implicitly deny the argument? Hume's analysis here denies the argument because it implicitly denies the first premise, that virtuous actions derive their merit only from virtuous motives. By admitting that actions are merely signs, and that motives may be neglected, Hume has admitted that in some attenuated sense actions are regarded as virtuous insofar as they have virtuous consequences. Why then was Hume led to admit that actions can be spoken of notwithstanding their motives as virtuous? The reason is that if his actor (in the argument above) regarded only the motives and did not consider the action itself, then his sense of
duty would demand not that he simply perform the action but that he perform it from the particular motive. But, as a matter of fact, he does not have this motive, consequently, he would be unable to do the act from a sense of duty because he would be unable to have the appropriate motive. Only the appropriate motive would satisfy his sense of duty because he would have regarded only the motive as virtuous. That is why Hume says that attention is fixed on the signs and the motive is neglected.

On this analysis, Hume has implicitly denied the strong sense of the first premise by allowing that actions may be properly called moral if their consequences are moral. On the other hand Hume has, in this argument, implicitly accepted the attenuated sense of the original argument discussed above by admitting that a motive of regard to the virtuousness of the action would occur after sufficient acquaintance with the consequences of actions of the proposed type. Further, the attenuated sense of the first premise is accepted since, in the above passage, it is true that an agent is moral when the moral consequences of his action were intended whether the act was instinctive, i. e., a desire to be kind to children, or whether the act was motivated by a regard to the fact that such action is morally approvable.

Justice and the Artificial Virtues.

Hume's analysis of the natural and artificial vir-
tues serves the purpose of distinguishing actions done from natural instinctive motive which are judged moral, from actions which are done initially from motives of directed self-interest,² and which come to acquire moral significance and, consequently, secondary moral motives. Since this chapter is concerned with moral obligations, and since the latter secondary moral motives are motives of moral duty, discussion of Hume's analysis of the artificial virtues is necessary before his view of moral obligation can be analyzed.

Two points of clarification, first, Hume's analysis of the artificial virtues is an analysis of justice as a paradigm case of an artificial virtue; and consequently, the following discussion will deal primarily with justice, but it should be understood as dealing with justice as a typical artificial virtue. Hence, anything said of justice below is properly applicable to the other artificial virtues. Second, Hume uses the expression 'virtue' to refer to moral motives, both primary and secondary; to types of moral acts or motives; to tokens of type actions and motives; and sometimes to more than one of these at a time. Thus, justice, a type action is called an artificial virtue, as are the secondary motives to just action. It has, therefore, been necessary in ambiguous cases in the follow-

²That is, desires of self-interest directed by empirical directive judgments as discussed in Chapter III above.
ing discussion to interpret these different senses of 'virtue'.

The natural virtues, according to Hume, are the motives, and the actions which flow from them, which produce non-sympathetic pleasure in other persons. Of these kinds are all the so-called instinctive motives which make man, what Hume calls 'limitedly benevolent', and the actions they produce, actions such as kindness to children, parental love, and concern for friends. They are called natural acts and motives because they arise instinctively, and they are 'perfectly unaccountable'. In addition, their moral significance is a function of their consequences, i.e., the production of non-sympathetic pleasure in the world.

Hume's analysis of the artificial virtues is considerably more complex and demands, as a consequence, careful and extensive discussion. Hume's purpose in his analysis of the artificial virtues was to show (1) that the initial motives to just action are motives of directed self-interest, \(^3\) and (2) that the moral significance of just action is an acquired, that is, artificial and secondary, characteristic. Hume's program is clear. He must show, first, that the original motive to just action was not a regard for the morality of just action; second, that man has no natural instinctive inclination to just action; third, that the origin-

\(^3\)Cf. EII307-9.
al springs of just action are motives of directed self-interest; and finally, fourth, that the moral significance of just action is an **acquired characteristic**. This analysis will lead us to the problem of moral obligation.

Consider the negative theses first. Regarding the question of whether the original motive to just action was a regard to the morality of just action, Hume introduces the argument discussed in Part One above. In its attenuated sense the argument states that the first motive to just action cannot have been a regard for the virtuousness of such action because the virtuousness of such action cannot be established until the morally significant consequences of such action are known. In other words, if recognition of the morality of an action can prompt or direct a particular agent to act then knowledge of the morality of an action is a necessary condition for a motive which is a regard to the morality of that action. Consequently, the first **tokens** of just action must have been motivated by some other regard in order that the **type** of action could have acquired recognition as morally significant.

Regarding the question of whether man has any natural instinctive inclinations to just action, Hume considers the following example:

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... I suppose a person to have lent me a sum of money, on the condition that it be restored in a few days; and also suppose, that after the expiration of the term agreed on, he demands the sum: I ask, **What reason or motive have I to restore the money?** It will, perhaps, be said, that my regard to justice, and abhorrence of villainy and knavery, are sufficient reasons for me,
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if I have the least grain of honesty, or sense of duty or obligation. And this answer, no doubt, is just and satisfactory to a man in his civiliz'd state, . . . But in his rude and natural condition . . . this answer wou'd be rejected as perfectly unintelligible and sophistical. For one in that situation wou'd immediately ask you, Wherein consists the honesty and justice, which you find in restoring the loan, and abstaining from the property of others? (T479-80)

Thus, if the motive to just action is not a regard to its morally significant consequences, then what possible natural instinctive inclination can account for this type of action? As Hume says, "'Tis requisite, then, to find some motive to acts of justice and honesty, distinct from our regard to the honesty; and in this lies the great difficulty." (T480) Hume considers the natural inclinations, and by a process of elimination he concludes that there are no natural inclinations to just action.

He considers, first, private interest, but he insists, "... self love, when it acts at its liberty, instead of engaging us to honest actions, is the source of all injustice and violence; ..." (T480). Hume considers, second, regard to public interest, . . . and he insists first, that, as he will later show, it is not, as a matter of fact, a regard to public interest which initiates just or honest action; second, that in some cases honest action is not in the public interest (T481) as, for example, in the case of certain secret loans; third, that as a matter of fact, when men pay their loans they rarely do so from

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4 As Glathe has pointed out, this is a question begging argument, (p. 102).
a regard to public interest (T481); and fourth, that ". . . there is no such passion in human minds, as the love of mankind, merely as such. . . ." (T481) Hume considers third, private benevolence, i.e., a concern for ". . . the interests of the party concern'd." (T482) But, Hume asks, what if the individual is profligate debaucheer, or what if the money is needed for my own family? In such cases private benevolence would lead to unjust actions.

Thus, by elimination, Hume concludes that no natural instinctive inclination can account for just action, and since a regard to the morality of the action is logically precluded, Hume concludes that unless it be allowed,

. . . that nature has establish'd a sophistry, and render'd it necessary and unavoidable, we must allow that the sense of justice and injustice is not deriv'd from nature but arises artificially, tho' necessarily from education, and human conventions. (T483)

In other words, with all other possibilities ruled out, Hume suggests that patterns of just behavior must be the result of directed self-interest, and he asks two questions, the answers to which constitute his positive thesis:

We now proceed to examine two questions, viz., concerning the manner, in which the rules of justice are establish'd by the artifice of men; and concerning the reasons, which determine us to attribute to the observance or neglect of these rules a moral beauty and deformity. (T484)

Hume begins by pointing out that given the conditions of man's environment, the " . . . unnatural conjunction of infirmity and of necessity . . . observ'd in its greatest perfection, . . ." (T488)
'Tis by society alone he [man] is able to supply his defects, and raise himself up to an equality with his fellow-creatures, and even acquire superiority above them. (T485)

Hence, according to Hume, man establishes society in order to remedy his several environmental difficulties by a conjunction of forces to augment power, (T485) by division of labor to increase productivity, (T485) and by mutual concern to prevent danger and accidents. (T486) This is not to say, as Hume is quick to point out, that man in his 'rude condition' has sufficient insight to see the advantages of a complex and sophisticated society, rather it is to say that beginning with the attraction between the sexes and the development of concern for children small societal units naturally arise which help to make man,

... sensible of the advantages, which they may reap from society, as well as fashion them by degrees for it, by rubbing off those rough corners and untoward affections, which prevent their coalition.5 (T486)

In other words, beginning with the family man begins to see the advantages of society and he naturally expands this society in order to reap further advantage. But one important problem remains, for the 'looseness and easy transferability of external goods' causes considerable disturbance. As Hume notes, "... the principle disturbance in society arises from those goods which we call external, and from their looseness and easy transition from one person to another." (T489) Thus, according to Hume, man, through a

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5 Cf. EII306-7.
convention, "... must seek for a remedy by putting these goods as far as possible on the same footing with the fixed and constant advantages of the mind and body." (T485)

Hence, in the establishment of property and justice, man, acting through directed self-interest, gives stability to external goods in order to eliminate the disturbing effect which the absence of this convention has on society. This is not to say, and Hume is quite clear on this point, that in establishing the rules of property and justice, man is acting against his own interest or the interest of his family and friends (i.e., against the natural dispositions); rather, the convention itself is established in order that man's best interest can be served. Hume says:

Instead of departing from our own interest, or from that of our nearest friends, by abstaining from the possessions of others, we cannot better consult both those interests, than by such a convention; because it is by that means we maintain society, which is so necessary to their well being and subsistence, as well as to our own. (T489)

This analysis of the origin of the conventions of justice and property is clearly consistent with Hume's analysis of directive empirical judgments as discussed in the preceding chapter. Thus Hume says:

The remedy, then, is not deriv'd from nature, but from artifice; or more properly speaking, nature provides a remedy in the judgment and understanding, for what is irregular and incommmodious in the affections. (T489)

Hume goes on (in familiar arguments with which this chapter need not deal in detail) to attack, (1) the Hobbesian pic-
ture of the state of nature, and (2) the classical conception of the social contract. In the first case, Hume argues plausibly that since it is "... utterly impossible for men to remain any considerable time in that savage condition, ..." (T493) the state of nature is a mere fiction though useful to the extent that it helps us to understand the origin and conventional character of the artificial virtues. In the latter case Hume argues that 'promise keeping' is a convention established practice, and that it carries a moral obligation only after the establishment of a pattern of morally significant and recognizable behavior. Hence, he says that the pattern arises, "When this common sense of interest is mutually express'd, and is known to both, ... [thus producing] a suitable resolution and behavior." (T490) In conclusion Hume says:

Here then is a proposition, which, I think, may be regarded as certain, that 'tis only from the selfishness and contr'd generosity of men, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants, that justice derives its origin. (T495)

Regarding the second question, concerning the reasons which "... determine us to attribute to the observance or neglect of these issues, a moral beauty and deformity, ..." Hume's analysis is quite clear. Insofar as the establishment of a social system is the establishment of a system of mutual forbearances, it will acquire moral significance insofar as it establishes a system of possible non-sympathetic pleasures and pains. In other words, the
establishment of a pattern of intersocial behavior is the establishment of a potentially moral system. At their inception these patterns of behavior lack moral significance because all actions are seen, initially, as actions of self-interest, but, through sympathy, acts of justice and injustice come to be approved and disapproved to the extent that they cause non-sympathetic pleasures and pains in the world. Hume notes that men,

... are at first induc'd only by a regard to interest; and this motive, on the first formation of society, is sufficiently strong a forcible, ... But tho' in our own actions [in a more complex society] we may frequently lose sight of that interest, ... we never fail to observe the prejudice we receive, either mediately or immediately, from the injustice of others; ... Nay when the injustice is so distant from us, as no way to affect our interest, it still displeases us; because we consider it as prejudicial to society, and pernicious to every one that approaches the person guilty of it. (T499)

In other words, the conventions are established by the members of a society in order that certain environmental needs can be satisfied. Insofar as there is any breach in the conventions, the needs of the members will be unsatisfied, and the members will, consequently, be displeased. Anyone aware of this breach of the rules of the society will be aware of the non-sympathetic pain caused, and will, through the sympathy mechanism, feel moral sentiments of disapproval, or will make moral judgments of disapproval.

As Hume says,

We partake of their uneasiness by Sympathy; and as every thing, which gives uneasiness in human actions, upon the general survey, is call'd Vice, and whatever produces satisfaction, in the same manner, is denomi-
nated Virtue; this is the reason why the sense of moral good and evil follows upon justice and injustice. (T499)

Note that the argument given above would contradict the strong sense of the argument in Part One; for if only motives and not actions are regarded as morally significant, and if all original motives to justice are self-interested, then justice could never acquire moral significance. Again Hume is using the attenuated sense of the argument. The actions, though motivated by self-interest, are morally significant insofar as they cause non-sympathetic pleasure and pain in the world, and it is the awareness of the moral significance of these actions that can prompt the first moral motive to this action. Hume says:

And tho' this sense [the sense of virtue] in the present case, [quoted directly above] be deriv'd only from contemplation of the actions of others, yet we fail not to extend it even to our own actions. The general rule reaches beyond those instances, from which it arose;

... Thus self-interest is the original motive to the establishment of justice; but a sympathy with the public interest is the source of the moral approbation which attends that virtue. (T499-500)

Hume insists therefore that the moral sentiments which are aroused, may prompt, in some unspecified degree, motives to just action.

We are now in a position to see the force of the distinction between the natural and artificial virtues.  

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6 See Part Three below.

7 In addition to those listed below, there is a secondary distinction which is not important to this discussion.
The natural virtues are (1) the natural instinctive motives which make man 'limitedly benevolent' and (2) their morally significant actions. The artificial virtues are (1) the artificial secondary motives of regard to the morality of (2) their morally significant actions. Hume is not clear whether an action, such as kindness to children, done from a motive of regard to the morality of such action, rather than from a natural instinctive motive, is natural or artificial. A further significant feature of the distinction is that the artificial virtues are based on established con-

Actions of justice needn't always bring about short run non-sympathetic pleasure, in fact they often bring about short run non-sympathetic pain. On the contrary, acts of natural virtue are always done with a non-sympathetic pleasure in view.

Hume summarizes these points in the essay "Of The Original Contract". He says: "All moral duties may be divided into two kinds. The first, are those to which men are impell'd by a natural instinct or immediate propensity, which operates on them, independent of all ideas of obligation, and of all views, either to public or private utility; of this nature are, love of children, gratitude to benefactors, pity to the unfortunate. When we reflect on the advantage, which results to society, from such humane instincts, we pay them the just tribute of moral approbation and esteem: but the person actuated by them, feels their power and influence, antecedent to any such reflection.

The second kind of moral duties are such as are not supported by any original instinct of nature, but are performed entirely from a sense of obligation, when we consider the necessities of human society, and the impossibility of supporting it, if these duties were neglected. It is thus justice, or a regard to the property of others, fidelity, or the observance of promises, become obligatory, and acquire authority over mankind." (Essays III 455)

Considerable discussion of this subject has been given above, Chapter IV, Part One, especially pages 92, 94-96.
ventional, and thus contingent, patterns of morally significant behavior, while, so far as Hume's analysis goes, the natural virtues seem to be based on somewhat less contingent, in fact, quite permanent characteristics of human nature. Finally, insofar as it is the defining characteristic of the artificial virtues that their motives are secondary artificial motives of moral interest, their actions are, according to Hume, properly said to be motivated by a 'sense of duty'. This leads to the problem of moral obligation.

Part Two: Moral Obligation.

Hume gave, in his work, very little space to the specific problem of moral obligation in spite of the fact that his view of moral obligation is both clearly defined and one of the characteristic features of his moral philosophy. There is, in fact, only one detailed passage in the whole of the Treatise which can properly be said to be a discussion of the problem of moral obligation. Before we proceed with a detailed discussion of this passage it will be necessary to make an important dis-

\[10\] In a later passage Hume summarizes this point when he says: "When men have found by experience that 'tis impossible to subsist without society, and that 'tis impossible to maintain society, while they give free course to their appetites; so urgent interest quickly restrains their actions and imposes an obligation (natural) to observe those rules which we call the laws of justice, . . . and by the necessary course of the passions and sentiments give rise to the moral obligations of duty, . . ." (T508)

\[11\] Exclusively of Hume's criticisms of his predecessors.
tion. Since Hume's analysis of moral obligation is both psychological and logical in character, it will be necessary to distinguish what I will call having an obligation from feeling an obligation. On this analysis to say that 'x has an obligation to do A' will be to say that under certain specifiable circumstances action A by 'x' is correct, is, in other words, consistent with a particular pattern of behavior. On the other hand, to say that 'x feels an obligation to do A will be to say that 'x' believes that he has an obligation to do A (as defined above) and that he is motivated\textsuperscript{12} to do A in accordance with that obligation. Hume refers to what I have called having an obligation as either the moral obligation to do A, the duty to do A, or having an obligation to do A.\textsuperscript{13} Hume usually refers to what I have called feeling an obligation as a 'sense of duty', though on some occasions he does refer to it as 'having an obligation'.\textsuperscript{14} Part, therefore, of the purpose of this section will be to distinguish carefully the correct senses of these expressions.

The most important single discussion of moral obligation in the Treatise deals with both what I have called feeling an obligation and having an obligation. In this

\textsuperscript{12}For the purposes of Part Two it will be assumed that moral judgments especially regarding moral obligations can prompt and direct certain dispositions and desires developed by natural, environmental, and experiential forces. It will be the purpose of Part Three to discuss these dispositions.

\textsuperscript{13}See especially T#8, 516, 517, 518, 569.

\textsuperscript{14}See especially T517, 518, 545, 569.
discussion Hume proposes to show, "... that a promise would not be intelligible before human conventions had establish'd it; and that even if it were intelligible, it would not be attended with any moral obligation." (T516)

As this passage would indicate, Hume's primary purpose is to show that the moral significance of actions of promise keeping is an acquired characteristic, subsequent in time to their initial performances as actions of directed self-interest. This was a very important point in Hume's overall analysis of the artificial virtues, because, if promises cause natural moral motives to their performance, then the moral significance of the conventions of justice and property would lie in the natural moral motives to promise keeping, and the distinction between the natural and artificial virtues would collapse. In other words, if there were natural moral motives to promise keeping, then the sense of duty, or feeling of obligation, which is the secondary and only moral motive to justice and property respect would be unnecessary, because there would be natural moral motives to the keeping of the agreements which establish these conventions.¹⁵

Hume's purpose, therefore, in this section, is to show first, that the original motive to promise keeping is a motive of directed self-interest, and second, that the moral significance of promise keeping, and consequently, the moral motives (i.e., the feelings of obligation) which

¹⁵Glathe, p. 120.
attend them, are both subsequent in time to the establishment of a pattern of promise keeping behavior.

There are, Hume suggests, two possible natural motives to promise keeping. The first, a natural inclination to keep promises, Hume denies 'out of hand'. He notes that, "Now, 'tis evident that we have no motive leading us to the performance of promises, distinct from a sense of duty."

(T516) Hume suggests, therefore, that perhaps an 'act of mind' is constitutive of the feeling of obligation or sense of duty which accompanies promises in an established society. He says: "If promises be natural and intelligible, there must be some act of mind attending these words, I promise and on this act of the mind must the obligation depend." (T516) Hume considers three possible 'acts of mind', the resolution to perform the act, a desire to perform the act, and a willing of the future performance of the act; and he concludes, in each case, that such 'acts of mind' are not sufficient to create a feeling of obligation.\(^{16}\) As an alternative, Hume suggests that,

\[ \ldots \text{since the act of mind, which enters into a promise, and produces its obligation, is neither the resolving, desiring, nor willing any particular performance, it must necessarily be the willing of that obligation, which arises from the promise.} \]

This alternative is, as Hume points out, conformable to our ordinary way of speaking when we say that we are 'bounû by

\[^{16}\text{E.g., 'desiring': }\ldots\text{we may bind ourselves without such desires or even with an aversion declared and avowed.}\] (T516)
our own consent'. But, he insists, this way of speaking
is a manifest absurdity.

All morality depends upon our sentiments; and when
any action, or quality of mind, pleases us after a cer-
tain manner, we say it is virtuous; and when the neg-
lect, or non-performance of it, displeases us after a
like manner, we say we lie under an obligation to per-
form it. (T517)

Hume is saying, and this is an important point, that moral
significance, and consequently the feeling of moral obli-
gation, are both, in some unspecified degree, a function of
the natural sympathy mechanism. Hume goes on:

A change of obligation supposes a change of sentiment;
[i. e., a change of moral sentiment] and a creation of
a new obligation [i. e., having and feeling an obli-
gation] supposes some new [moral] sentiment to arise.
(T517)

Thus, the creation of the feeling of obligation or sense of
duty depends on a precedent moral sentiment or feeling of
moral approval. But, Hume insists:

. . . 'tis certain we can naturally no more change our
own sentiments, than the motions of the heavens; nor
by a single act of our will, that is, by a promise,
render any action agreeable or disagreeable, moral or
immoral; . . . (T517)

In other words, a necessary condition for feeling a moral
obligation is the recognition of the moral significance of
the obliged act. Since moral significance is a function
of a natural human mechanism, viz., disinterested and ex-
tensive sympathy, and since it is not possible to will sym-
pathetic feelings and consequently moral significance, and
since the recognition of the moral significance of an act
is a precondition for feeling a moral obligation toward that
act, then it is not possible, by an 'act of mind', to will a feeling of obligation.

In conclusion, Hume asserts:

It wou'd be absurd, therefore, to will any new obligation, that is, any new sentiment of pain or pleasure; [sympathetic] nor is it possible, that men cou'd naturally fall into so gross an absurdity. A promise, therefore, is naturally something altogether unintelligible, nor is there any act of mind belonging to it. (T517)

Thus, Hume denies that any 'act of mind' can create the feeling of obligation annexed to the convention of promise keeping.

Hume gives a further, and for the purposes of this chapter, very important argument. He says:

The same truth may be prov'd still more evidently by that reasoning, which prov'd justice in general to be an artificial virtue. No action can be requir'd of us as our duty, unless there be in human nature some actuating passion or motive, capable of producing the action.17 (T518)

In other words, in order for us to act from a sense of moral duty, from a feeling of obligation, there must be some natural motive which can produce the action in order that the action can acquire moral significance, and, consequently, be done from a sense of its moral worth.18 Hume goes on:

17Hume is again referring to the attenuated sense of the argument discussed in Part One.

18Hume's analysis is ambiguous in one important respect. Hume should have distinguished between a virtuous action type and a virtuous action token. Thus, while it is true that in order for an acting agent to act from a sense of duty, i.e., from a motive which is a regard to the virtuousness of the act, the act must naturally have been motivated by some other motive, whether instinctively moral
"This motive [i.e., the first motive] cannot be a sense of duty, . . . " (T518) again, because moral significance is subsequent to the first occurrence of the act.\(^1\) Then Hume says:

\begin{quote}
A sense of duty supposes an antecedent obligation:
And where an action is not requir'd by any natural passion, it cannot be requir'd by any natural obligation; since it may be omitted without proving any defect or imperfection in the mind and temper, and consequently without any vice. (T518)(Italics mine.)
\end{quote}

In other words, the sense of duty (feeling of obligation) supposes an antecedent obligation (supposes the acting agent has, or thinks he has, an obligation). A precondition, therefore, of feeling an obligation is that there must exist a type or pattern of behavior (in this case, a type with moral significance) to which the particular proposed act in question can properly be said to be a token of a type (or consistent with a pattern), and under which, the particular acting agent can properly be said to have an obligation. Further, Hume argues, if an

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[1]{\textit{Cf. EII306.}}
\end{footnotes}
action is not naturally possible, then it is impossible to have an obligation to that act, and, similarly, it is impossible to feel an obligation to that act. Since the act cannot be done, and thus acquire moral significance, there is no blame accorded its omission. If it was impossible for an act of promise keeping to naturally occur, then it is impossible (1) to know its moral significance, (2) understand that within a particular context it is obligatory, and (3) feel an obligation or be motivated to act from a sense of duty.

Hume argues further:

Now 'tis evident we have no [moral] motive to the performance of promises, distinct from a sense of duty. If we thought, that promises had no moral obligation, we shou'd never feel any [moral] inclination to observe them. (T518)

Hume's point here is that since the only moral motive to promise keeping is a sense of duty, if the acts of promise keeping had not acquired moral significance from antecedent occurrences (motivated by non-moral motives of directed self-

20 Hume never carefully analyzes what is one of the significant philosophical questions regarding obligation: The question of when a particular agent properly speaking is a member of a convention and can be said to lie under the obligations of that convention. He did, however, note that regarding promise keeping, a conventional method of committing oneself to the convention is a 'certain form of words'. Thus he says: "They [the certain form of words] are the conventions of men [and] . . . experience has taught us, that human affairs would be conducted much more for mutual advantage, were their certain symbols or signs instituted, by which we give each other security of our conduct in any particular incident." (T522) Thus, implicitly, Hume asserts that there are criteria for determining whether a particular agent is, properly speaking, a member of a convention.
interest), then it would be impossible to act from a feeling of moral obligation. Again, the moral significance of an act is subsequent to its occurrence by whatever motive (natural moral or natural non-moral), and the recognition that a particular act is obligatory, is subsequent to the establishment of the pattern of behavior, i.e., subsequent to their occurrence a sufficient number of times that the correct and incorrect patterns of behavior can be distinguished through their production, respectively, of non-sympathetic pleasure and pain. A necessary condition for an acting agent to know that he has a moral obligation, knows, in other words, that a particular action is morally correct or consistent with the morally correct pattern of behavior, is that this pattern of behavior exists; and knowing that he has an obligation is a necessary condition for his feeling that obligation and acting morally from a sense of duty.

This is not the case, as Hume points out in the next passage, with the natural virtues:

Tho' there was no obligation to relieve the miserable, our humanity wou'd lead us to it; and when we omit that duty, the immorality of the omission arises from its being proof, that we are want of the natural sentiments of humanity. A father knows it to be his duty to take care of his children: But he has also a natural inclination to it. And if no human creature had that inclination, [whether moral or non-moral] no one cou'd lie under any such obligation. (T518-19)

In other words, if no human beings had motives to actions such as being kind to children, whether natural moral in-
clinations, or natural non-moral instinctive or reflective motives, then actions of this type would never be regarded as duties. Implicit in Hume's analysis is the assertion that the natural moral motives also establish a pattern of actions which, though less conventional, can properly be described as duties, and, as Hume points out, this may provide feelings of obligation to someone who lacks the natural moral inclinations to such action. Finally, Hume says:

But as there is naturally no [moral] inclinations to observe promises, distinct from a sense of their obligation; it follows, that fidelity is no natural virtue, [i.e., it is an artificial virtue] and that promises have no force, antecedent to human conventions. (T519)

In other words, promise keeping is not, like kindness to children, an action performed from a natural instinctive moral motive, nor is it performed from a sense of duty based on the recognition of the moral significance of an established pattern of naturally inclined moral behavior. A particular promise keeping act is performed within an established convention from a sense that it is correct according to, or consistent with, a morally significant convention; and the sense of duty or feeling of obligation which motivates this action is a reflection of the, subsequent intime, acquisition of moral significance by the practice, which was established initially by non-moral motives of directed self-interest.

Hume concludes this discussion with an analysis
of the various motives of directed self-interest which give rise to the convention of promise keeping. (T521-25)

In summary, the above analysis of moral obligation and the artificial virtues has shown that all actions which come to be regarded as moral are initially motivated either by natural instinctive moral motives or natural self-interested non-moral motives; and they are regarded as moral because they have certain consequences, viz., the production of non-sympathetic pleasure in the world. Secondarily, the moral actions may be motivated by a regard to the morality of the action, i.e., by an awareness that the particular action has morally significant consequences, and is, consequently, an action congruent with the pattern of correct moral behavior. 21 To have such a motive, is to feel an obligation, and the awareness by a particular agent that a particular proposed action is demanded by the established pattern of behavior, is knowledge of the fact that the agent has an obligation to perform that act. Thus, in order to feel an obligation, i.e., be motivated by the thought that a particular action is morally obligatory, the particular agent must have come to regard the particular

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21 Hume notes, in an interesting passage, that in questions in which several moral duties demand fulfillment, the natural virtues take precedence, cet. par., over the artificial virtues. He says: "... we always consider the natural and usual force of the passions, when we determine concerning virtue and vice; ... [and] a man naturally loves his children better than his nephews, and his nephews better than his cousins, his cousins better than strangers, where everything else is equal." (T483-4)
type of action, of which this proposed action is a token, as moral, which presupposes acquaintance with some tokens of that type of action. An agent must think that he has an obligation (he may, of course, be mistaken) before he can feel an obligation, and before he thinks he has an obligation, he must make certain moral judgments about certain token acts and generalize on these tokens as representative of a type act.

Hume's entire analysis of the artificial virtues is developed in order to account for the fact that the only moral motive to justice, promise keeping, and property respect, are artificial motives, i.e., are done from a sense of duty. Further, since the original interested motives to these actions are based on certain directive empirical judgments about particular contingent states of affairs, if those states of affairs are sufficiently altered, the moral obligations, and the sense of duty which accompany them, will ultimately vanish.

An agent is moral when his actions are motivated by moral motives, whether instinctive natural motives to pleasure causing acts, or motives of obligation to pleasure causing acts. Properly speaking, an agent is not moral if his motives are not moral in one of these two senses, though some of his actions may still be called moral provided they produce pleasure in the world. This leads to the final question of this chapter: How, according to Hume, does the awareness that he has an obligation motivate an agent to act
from a sense of duty? This, according to Hume, is a complex and difficult question.

**Part Three: The Sense of Duty.**

Hume's analysis of the motives to moral action is consistent with his analysis of 'reason' and action in the preceding chapter. According to this analysis, any particular judgment affects action only insofar as it prompts or directs the dispositions of the particular acting agent. Hence, appropriate dispositions, and recognition of the truth of the judgment, are the preconditions of that judgment affecting action.

The case is the same with moral data. Insofar as a particular moral judgment affects action, it affects the dispositions to be moral of the particular acting agent.\(^{22}\) There are, of course, no natural desires to be moral,\(^{23}\) as there are such natural desires as hunger or the sexual appetites, consequently, the dispositions affected by moral judgments are a function of man's natural desire for what he thinks is 'good' (in the non-moral sense) and the context in which he comes to acquire a sense of what is 'good'.

Hume's one, unified, and unfortunately rather short,\(^{24}\)

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\(^{22}\)It is very important to recognize that Hume is consistent with his attack on his predecessors. Moral data, like all data, does not ever necessarily affect action, i.e., there is no logical relation between the making of a moral judgment and acting morally.

\(^{23}\)To be distinguished from naturally moral desires, e.g., kindness to children.

\(^{24}\)Hume was not particularly concerned with the questions
analysis of the environmental forces which together influence the development of the dispositions to be moral, occurs significantly at the conclusion of his analysis of the origin of the artificial virtues. Thus, Hume says:

Tho' this progress of the sentiments [i.e., moral sentiments recognizing the moral significance of just action] be natural, and even necessary, 'tis certain, that it is here forwarded by the artifice of politicians, who, in order to govern more easily, and preserve peace in society, have endeavor'd to produce esteem for justice, and an abhorrence of injustice. \(^{25}\) (T500)

In other words, while the moral significance is recognized by each man through the sympathy mechanism, the dispositions and desires to act justly may, in part, be developed by politicians. \(^{26}\) Thus, a precondition of a man's potential to secondary moral motives is the capacity to make moral judgments. Hume says:

Any artifice of politicians may assist nature in the producing of these sentiments, ... but 'tis impos-

of what he called 'practical morality', i.e., with the question of how to get men to act morally, though he did realize that 'moral theory' was a necessary condition for 'practical morality'. Referring to the fact that moral behavior is in every man's best interest, Hume says, "The same system may help us to form a just notion of happiness as well as the dignity, of virtue, and may interest every principle of our nature, in the embracing and cherishing that noble quality. ... But I forbear insisting on this subject. Such reflexions require a work apart, very different from the genius of the present." (T520)

\(^{25}\) Cf. EII214-5.

\(^{26}\) Part of Hume's insistence that moral judgments and moral actions are distinct (see Chapter I) was motivated by his recognition of the enormous influence which various social, cultural, and environmental factors have on moral motivation, and the marked variation in moral action between two men who, within the same culture, act differently, though agreeing in their moral judgments.
sible it should be the sole cause of the distinction
we make between virtue and vice. . . . The utmost pol-
icians can perform, is to extend the natural senti-
ments beyond their original bounds; but still nature
must furnish the materials, and give us some notion
of moral distinctions. (T500)

In other words, politicians can develop dispositions to
act in accordance with the moral judgments.27 Further,
Hume notes:

As publick praise and blame encrease our esteem
for justice; so private education and instruction con-
tribute to the same effect. For as parents easily ob-
serve, that a man is the more useful, both to himself
and others, the greater degree of probity and honour
he is endow'd with; . . . (T500)

Thus the education that parents provide has a great in-
fluence in the development of the dispositions to be moral
in their children. In fact, Hume insists, the desires de-
veloped by parents have considerable firmness and solidity
in the minds of their children.

Further, Hume notes, our regard to our reputation,
and our natural desire for love, demand that we act with a
considerable degree of moral respect. Hume says, in an
often quoted passage:

There is nothing, which touches us more nearly than our
reputation, and nothing on which our reputation more de-
pends than our conduct, with relation to the property
of others. For this reason, every one, who has any re-
gard to his character, or who intends to live on good
terms with mankind, must fix an inviolable law to him-
self, never, by any temptation, be induc'd to violate
those principles, which are essential to a man of pro-
bity and honour. (T501)

Hence, the natural inclination to preserve our reputation,

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27Discussion of the circumstances necessary for this
conditioning will be given in Chapter V, below.
to retain our self-respect, and remain on good terms with
men, aids in the development of the desire to be moral.

In summary, Hume is trying to point out that vari-
ous social, cultural, and natural factors, subsequent to
the capacity to make moral judgments, develop, to a greater
or lesser degree, the desire to be moral. It is further
clear, that to some degree, each man may also help to de-
velop these moral habits and desires for himself. As
Hume says:

When any virtuous motive is common in human nature,
a person, who feels his heart devoid of that motive,
may hate himself on that account, and may perform
the action without the motive, from a certain sense
of duty, in order to acquire by practice, that vir-
tuous principle. . . . (T479)(Italics mine.)

Conclusion.

Hume's analysis of moral obligation, as discussed
above, is both psychological and logical in character. Hume
has shown, (1) that significant segments of the established
patterns of behavior which are considered moral are arti-
ficial patterns established by directive empirical judg-
ments about the necessity for certain types of intersocial
behavior; (2) that the moral significance which these pat-
terns of behavior have is an acquired characteristic; (3)

28 Cf. EII188.

29 Wand has suggested that Hume's analysis of the
dispositions to behave morally denies any significant sense
of moral responsibility. It will be part of the purpose
of the next chapter to defend Hume's view against such
criticism.
that actions, consciously in accordance with these established patterns of artificial moral behavior, are motivated by a sense of duty; and (4) that the motives, dispositions, and desires which cause these dutiful actions are constituted by a conjunction of natural, experiential, and environmental forces.

Further, Hume's analysis of moral obligation is consistent with his theory of moral approval and his general theory of action to a remarkable degree. For example, Hume's discussion of moral sentiments, as discussed in Chapter II, included an analysis of the variation of moral sentiments due to factors such as distance in time or place and personal involvement. In order to correct this variation, Hume pointed out that the moral sentiments are properly felt only from a particular perspective, but, as Hume noted, personal involvement does not always make this perspective possible. In spite of this, it is still possible, according to Hume, to generalize about the feelings which would be felt if the particular perspective could be taken, and the conclusion of this process is what I have called a 'moral judgment'. Now, clearly, if Hume's analysis had not included these so-called moral judgments, then it would never be possible for a particular agent to make moral evaluations about his own actions, because personal involvement would be at its maximum, and the chances of correct moral sentiments would be very slim. Precisely because Hume's analysis included 'moral judgments' it is possible for a particular
agent to correctly evaluate his own proposed action, a necessary condition for an agent being able to act from a sense of duty.

Similarly, Hume's analysis of the relation of reason to action, as discussed in Chapter III, is consistent with his analysis of moral obligation given above. Moral data, like all data, affects action only to the degree that it affects the desires and dispositions of the particular acting agent. Hence Hume's analysis of the natural obligations is very similar to his analysis of the moral obligations. The natural obligations, it should be remembered, assert what actions fall within the hypothetical pattern of prudent behavior, given the contingent limits and direction of man's capacities in a particular environment; they function to prompt and direct human action. This does not, however, mean that recognition by a particular agent of the fact that he has a natural obligation will necessarily cause that agent to act in accordance with that obligation. Similarly, the moral obligations assert which actions fall within the established pattern of morally significant behavior, as defined by man's capacity to make moral judgments; and they, too, function to prompt and direct action only to the degree that the particular acting agent is disposed to act morally.

In addition, Hume's analysis of moral obligation has shown the conventional character of a substantial part of
the human behavior which is considered morally significant, and it has shown that the ability of moral obligation statements to function by prompting and directing actions is, primarily, a result of the information they present, viz., that a particular action is correct, and, in a particular context, consistent with a particular pattern of behavior.

It will be the purpose of the next chapter to show the plausibility of Hume's view through an analysis of the work of several of his critics.
CHAPTER V

MORAL OBLIGATION II.

Introduction

Perhaps the most common charge leveled against Hume's philosophy, initiated by Kant and continuing to the present day, is the charge that it gave psychological answers to fundamentally philosophical questions. Usually this charge has been leveled at Hume's epistemology where it is often asserted, for example, that Hume's analysis of causation is inappropriately psychological rather than logical or philosophical in character. More recently, this charge has been leveled in a somewhat less explicit form at Hume's moral philosophy. The substance of this charge is that Hume's analysis of moral evaluation is inappropriately psychological rather then philosophical in character, and, as a consequence, his analyses of certain concepts critical to an adequate theory of moral obligation (viz., obligation in general, justification, and responsibility) are also inappropriately psychological in character.

To assert of a theory of moral evaluation that it is inappropriately psychological rather then philosophical in character is to assert that, rather than discussing and debating the legitimacy of such moral evaluations as actually occur, the theory explains, from a psychological point
of view, how these evaluations occur. Similarly, to assert of a theory of moral obligation that it is inappropriately psychological rather than philosophical in character is to assert that, rather than discussing and debating the questions of how and under what circumstances an agent may be said to have a duty or lie under an obligation, the theory merely explains, from a psychological point of view, how particular agents are motivated to act from a sense of duty.

Consider the following quotations, dealing respectively with Hume's theories of evaluation (approval), justification, obligation, and responsibility.

It is apparent that moral theory . . . [according to Hume] is not a normative study in the sense of a study within whose purpose it falls, not merely to describe the circumstances environing such moral emotions as actually occur, but also to debate and decide their legitimacy.¹ (Italics mine.)

We can find Hume's argument plausible only if we think, wrongly, that the sole type of explanatory reason is the means-end type . . . [but] reason can account for some of our ends, not only in the sense of explaining why it is that we have them but also in the sense of showing that they are in accordance with reason, justified from a rational point of view.² (Italics mine.)

The only reason why an agent has an obligation to do a certain act is because [according to Hume] he has a motive to do actions of that sort.³ (Italics mine.)

Instead of being agents, on Hume's view we are creatures, and to accept the view that every act of moral obligation must be due to the influence of others upon us, is

¹Glathe, p. 99.
²Baier, pp. 265-66.
³Broiles, p. 71.
to deny the fundamental moral fact of responsibility.\textsuperscript{4} Implicit in each of these quotations is the charge that Hume gave psychological answers to philosophical questions. In the first quotation, Glathe is insisting that, according to Hume, the study of moral approval or evaluation is reducible to the study of certain psychological mechanisms, and the circumstances which stimulate these mechanisms. In the second quotation, Baier is contending that Hume collapses the distinction between explanatory reasons, i. e., reasons dealing with desires and the means to their fulfillment, and justifying reasons, by reducing all questions of justification (moral and non-moral) to questions of psychological explanation. In the third quotation, Broiles is asserting that Hume has reduced obligations to motives, thus eliminating the important sense in which an individual may be said, from a philosophical point of view, to have an obligation, though at the moment he has, from a psychological point of view, no sense or feeling of duty. Finally in the fourth quotation, Wand is insisting that because Hume's analysis of moral obligation is wholly psychological it is impossible for Hume to speak, philosophically, about the problem of responsibility.

It will be the purpose of this chapter to show that Hume's moral philosophy includes a philosophical discussion of moral obligation in spite of a 'psychologized' analysis of moral evaluation. These issues will be discussed in the

\textsuperscript{4}Wand, p. 165.
following manner. Part One will discuss a much maligned argument, given by Hume at the outset of his moral philosophy, the purpose of which is to justify his assertion that the ultimate grounds of moral evaluations are feelings or emotions of moral sentiments, rather than reasoned distinctions. Part Two will show that three criticisms leveled implicitly or explicitly at this argument by R. D. Broiles, B. Wand, and Kurt Baier, which are, by implication, an attack on Hume's theory of moral obligation, are without foundation. Part Three will conclude this discussion by pointing out that Hume's analysis of moral obligation includes a discussion of how, and under what circumstances, an agent may be said to have a moral obligation, in addition to an analysis of the motives of duty; and that, as a consequence, Hume's discussion of moral obligation includes an analysis of the philosophical as well as psychological issues involved in this concept.

**Part One: The Argument.**

The argument with which this section will deal is given in Part I, Section I, Book III of the *Treatise*. Hume argues:

If morality had naturally no influence on human passions and actions, 'twere in vain to take such pains to inculcate it; and nothing would be more fruitless than the multitude of rules and precepts, with which all moralists abound. . . . Since morals, therefore, have an influence on the actions and affections, it follows, that they cannot be deriv'd from reason; and that because reason alone, as we have already prov'd, can never have any such influence. Morals excite passions, and pro-
duce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular. The rules of morality, therefore, are not conclusions of our reason. (T457)

In other words, since it is an empirical fact that moral distinctions do have an effect on action, and since reason, as defined in Book II, Part III, Section III, cannot have such an effect on action then the rules of morality are not conclusions of reason. To put the argument more formally, Hume is saying:

(1) Moral judgments and rules have an influence on actions and affections.

(2) The conclusions of reason do not, per se, have an influence on actions and affections.

(3) Therefore, moral judgments and rules are not the conclusions of reason per se.

Several of Hume's critics, notably Baier and Broiles, have been dissatisfied with the conclusion of this argument and have, as a consequence, tried to show that one or both of the premises is false or misleading. Before we consider the arguments presented by these critics let us review the grounds on which Hume asserts these premises.

What are the grounds and implications of the first premise? Note, to say that 'moral judgments have an influence on action' is to say, according to Hume, that actions may be motivated by a sense of duty or regard to the virtuousness of the action. The first premise is grounded, therefore, in Hume's conclusions, as discussed in Chapter IV above, regarding the motives of moral obligation; and in Hume's conclusions, as discussed in Chapter III above, re-
garding motivation in general. Consider the latter discussion first.

Hume's analysis of motivation, as discussed in Chapter III, pointed out that all action is motivated by desires, and all desires are based either on certain instinctive emotions, such as bodily appetites, or on the natural distinction between pleasure and pain. In other words, all motivation, according to Hume, is based on some sort of natural sentiment raised to the level of a desire whenever that sentiment can be satisfied, as Hume says, 'by any motion of the mind or body'. All desires, therefore, have their ground in natural human sentiments or emotions. Further, according to Hume, except in special cases of confined generosity, human action is generally self-interested. This does not, however, mean that an agent may not, under special circumstances, act with benevolence toward strangers. As Hume says:

Would any man who is walking along as willingly tread on another's gouty toes whom he has no quarrel with, as on hard flint and pavement? (E11226)

This sort of action can be motivated by a desire to satisfy the natural non-moral sympathetic sentiments, but, as Hume is quick to point out, this sort of desire will always be overridden by any self-interested or limitedly benevolent desire. Hence, the sympathetic sentiments will manifest themselves in desires and actions in all or most men pro-

\[5\]See the discussion of general sympathy in Chapter II above, especially pages 29-39.
vided there is no conflict between the sympathetic desires, the desires for objects of self-interest, or the desires for the happiness of friends and family. One important implication of this analysis is that the more specific sympathetic emotions of moral approval are similarly potential desires and motives of action.

Hume's analysis of motivation is further modified in his analysis of moral obligation. Hume notes that the sympathetic sentiments of moral approval are often raised to the level of desires even when they conflict with private interest. The actions motivated by such desires are the actions described in Chapter IV above, motivated by a feeling of obligation. The conditions necessary for these kinds of motives, according to Hume, are the various appropriate environmental forces. In other words, the sentiments of approval may be raised to the level of desires and dispositions in conflict with the desires and dispositions of self-interest by the artifice of politicians, parents, and educators. But, and this is a very important point, these various forces,

... may assist nature in producing of these sentiments, ... but 'tis impossible it should be the sole cause of the distinction betwixt virtue and vice. ... The utmost politicians [and the others] can perform, is, to extend the natural sentiments beyond their original bounds; ... (T500)

Hume's point, which is quite clear, is that provided the sympathetic feelings are given in human nature, these feelings can be raised to the level of motives and developed in-
to dispositions by various social and cultural forces, and these desires and dispositions may override the natural desires and dispositions of self-interest; but, Hume insists, still nature must furnish the materials and give us some sentiments of moral approval.

Bernard Wand, in his article "Hume's Account of Moral Obligation" is the only one of Hume's commentators who has noticed this point. Wand says:

... a sense of duty or moral obligation for Hume is partly natural and partly artificial. It is natural in the sense that the original distinction between right and wrong depends upon a natural emotional reaction to certain kinds of actions. It is artificial in the sense that this original emotional reaction must be developed into a set attitude by such social forces as custom, the artifice of politicians, education; if it is to be at all effective as a prompting motive.\(^6\)

Wand's point, a point which he notes is the only explanation for the many references throughout Hume's text to social forces, conditions, etc.,\(^7\) is that while the natural moral sentiments are a necessary condition for acts motivated by a sense of duty, so, also, are the various social and cultural forces a necessary condition for these acts.

This analysis is consistent with the distinction between having and feeling an obligation as discussed in Chapter IV. A particular acting agent may be aware that he has an obligation, i. e., be aware that a particular proposed action is consistent with the pattern of morally

\(^6\)Wand, p. 162.

\(^7\)Wand, p. 162.
approved behavior, but this does not mean that he will feel the obligation, i.e., be motivated by a sense of duty. Note, first, that the agent may be aware that he has a moral obligation either through a moral judgment or through a feeling of moral approval, and second, that a feeling of moral approval is not to be confused with a feeling of moral obligation. Further, in his 'rude condition' man may be motivated by a feeling of approval, but only provided, first, that his own interest is not involved, and, second, that there is a pattern of behavior (i.e., a pattern of naturally or instinctively moral actions) from which these feelings can be derived. In other words, the effect of moral judgments on action depends on the development of dispositions to moral behavior provided by environmental forces. Moreover, sympathetic feelings of moral approval may, in man's 'rude condition', motivate action, provided they are not in conflict with other desires. Further discussion of this point is included in the analysis of the Broiles' argument in Part Two below.

In conclusion, it should be noted that this premise rests on what Hume considers to be an empirical psychological fact. No conditioning of human beings is possible unless that conditioning can appeal to some sort of natural sentiments. As Hume says, "The utmost politicians can perform is to extend the natural sentiments beyond their original bounds; but still nature must furnish the materials and give some notion of moral distinctions." (T500) (Italics
mine.) Thus, when Hume says that moral rules and judgments influence action, he is asserting that since moral rules and judgments presuppose generalizations about certain natural human sentiments they can have an effect on action precisely because the sentiments on which they are grounded can be raised, under certain specifiable circumstances, to the level of desires and dispositions.

What, then, are the grounds and implications of the second premise? This premise states: the conclusions of reason do not, per se, have an influence on action. The primary problem with this premise is with the meaning of 'reason'. Hume's analysis of 'reason', as discussed above, states that reason,

...exerts itself after two ways, as it judges from demonstration or probability; as it regards the abstract relations of our ideas, or those relations of objects, of which experience only gives us information. (T413)

Reason, so defined, is merely productive of judgments. Reason, or the process of inquiry, is only to be understood, in this context, as the process through which certain judgments are presented to the mind. Thus, for example, when Hume argues that there is no combat between reason and the passions he means that judgments, the end products of the process of inquiry, are not in 'combat' with the passions.

Further, it is very important to understand that Hume's specification of the meaning of 'reason' is not

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8See Part Two of Chapter III.
meant to conform to ordinary usage. In fact, Hume says, "Nothing is more usual in philosophy, and even in common life than to talk of the combat of passion and reason. (T413) Hume is, thus, quite clear that the definition of 'reason' that he has proposed is not consistent with ordinary usage. Granted this definition of reason, what does Hume mean when he says that reason alone does not influence actions? This subject has been discussed in detail in Chapter III.

The substance of the analysis of reason as a factor in action, as it was discussed in Chapter III, was that reason (i.e., judgments) whether about causes and effects, about the nature and existence of objects, or about the abstract relations of ideas, never affects action unless the particular agent who is aware of the conclusions of reason is so disposed to be interested in the information presented in these conclusions. For example, Hume argues:

It can never in the least concern us to know, that such objects are causes, and such others effects, if both the causes and effects be indifferent to us. (T414)

In other words, since reason produces only judgments, it cannot affect action unless the judgments presented supply information about which the agent has positive or negative sentiments, i.e., with which the agent is concerned. Further, this chapter showed that if the information presented was of concern to the particular acting agent, it affected his action either (1) by directing his action 'concerning
causes and effects', (2) by directing his desires concerning the means to particular ends, or (3) by prompting dispositions through the presentation of information concerning the nature and existence of objects. As Hume says:

... reason, in the strict and philosophical sense, can have an influence on our conduct only after two ways: Either when it excites a passion by informing us of the existence of something which is the proper object of it; or when it discovers the connexion of causes and effects, so as to afford us a means of exerting any passion. (T459)

This analysis of reason is consistent with Hume's analysis of desire, for reason prompts and directs action only when it prompts the dispositions (or sentiments), or directs the desires of the particular agent. Reason, as a factor in action, is seen solely as a mediate cause of action. Hume's assertion, in the second premise, that reason alone does not influence action, thus means that a judgment which does not affect dispositions or desires, i. e., reason alone, does not affect action.

If we grant Hume his two premises then we must grant his conclusion that the rules of morality are not conclusions of reason. In effect, this conclusion states that since all human action is caused by dispositions or sentiments manifest in particular desires, and since moral distinctions have a significant effect on action, then moral distinctions must ultimately be grounded in some natural human sentiments. Further, it should be noted, that the analysis of sympathy as discussed in Chapter II is an analysis of the natural human sentiments responsible for the
effect of moral judgments on human action.

Part Two: The Criticisms.

R. D. Broiles, in his recent book The Moral Philosophy of David Hume, has explicitly attacked the first premise of this argument. Broiles' argument is leveled at what he considers to be an incorrect implication of this premise. Broiles says:

Moral precepts and rules move us to action [according to Hume] because they are generalizations about the basic sentiments and passions of human nature. They tell us what things men have sentiments for and against. All moral obligations then, depend upon there being motives for doing actions of the sort we claim to [be] obligated to do. . . . He [Hume] is contending that morals move us to action because there is a moral obligation when there is a motive, and there is only a moral obligation when there is a motive.9

In other words, according to Broiles, Hume's assertion that 'morals move' implies, for Hume, that, "The only reason why an agent has an obligation to do a certain act is because he has a motive to do actions of that sort."10

This conclusion is erroneous. It will be the purpose of the first part of this section to show that Broiles has been led to this erroneous conclusion by a misinterpretation of two quite distinct factors in Hume's moral philosophy. First, by a failure to distinguish, as discussed above (p. 135), between a feeling of moral approval and a feeling of moral obligation, i.e., the distinction between the awareness by an actor of a feeling of moral approval,

9Broiles, p. 62.

10Broiles, p. 71.
and the awareness by an actor of a motive or feeling of obligation; and second, by a failure to understand that Hume's assertion that some natural motive to an action is a logical precondition for a secondary motive of regard to the virtuousness of that action, does not entail that a motive is demanded in order for there to be an obligation.

Consider, again, the passage from Broiles, quoted above. Now it is true, in one sense, according to Hume, that there is a moral obligation when there is a motive. But by this Hume means that since a necessary condition for a motive of obligation is the recognition by an agent that a particular action is morally praiseworthy, and since a necessary condition for this recognition of praiseworthiness is that the action must have occurred, i.e., been motivated by some natural motive, in order that the proposed action taken could have been recognized as an action of a type with the requisite morally significant consequences, then, an agent can only recognize that he has a moral obligation provided that there was some precedent natural motive to the type of act now considered obligatory. This does not imply, as Broiles suggests, that there is an obligation only when there is a motive. Properly speaking, an agent can only recognize that he has an obligation to do some act provided that there have been some precedent motives to that act. It is perfectly possible, as was pointed out in Part Three of Chapter IV above, for an agent, according to Hume, to be aware that he has an obligation through a
feeling of moral approval without being motivated to act.

A further source for this error can be seen in Broiles' assertion that moral rules are generalizations about the basic sentiments and passions of human nature. One point of clarification, properly speaking, according to Hume, moral rules are not generalizations about moral sentiments; rather, they are prescriptive assertions which direct or define the norms of moral action. Moral rules, according to Hume, are the conclusions of practical morality. As Hume says, in a passage immediately preceding the argument under discussion,

Philosophy is commonly divided into speculative and practical; and as morality is always comprehended under the latter division, 'tis supposed to influence our passions and actions, and go beyond the calm and indolent judgments of the understanding. (T457)(Italics mine.)

On Hume's analysis moral rules would appeal to, or presuppose, generalizations about basic human sentiments, i.e., moral sentiments, but they are not themselves these generalizations. Broiles' error can be seen, granted this point of clarification, when we realize that this assertion implies, for Broiles, not that moral rules presuppose generalizations about feelings of moral approval, but that they presuppose generalizations about feelings of moral approval which are also and always motives to moral action. Broiles has failed to distinguish a feeling of moral approval from a feeling of moral obligation. Hume's contention that no action could be motivated in human nature un-
less there were some feelings or emotions natural to human nature to which an appeal could be made, underlies his contention that moral distinctions must be grounded in natural human sentiments, but this contention does not, as Broiles suggests, mean that these emotions are motives to action. They are, on Hume's analysis, mere emotions or sentiments which, in man's 'rude condition', always give way to natural inclinations of self-interest and confined generosity. It is very important to understand that, according to Hume, a feeling of moral approval is not, per se, a feeling of moral obligation. Broiles' book contains no analysis of the sympathy mechanism, as a consequence, he has succumbed to the temptation to simplify Hume's account both of the motives of moral obligations, and the conditions necessary for these motives. Broiles says:

The only reason why an agent has an obligation to do a certain act is because he has a motive to do actions of that sort, and this is, as I tried to show, a fundamental misconception in Hume's Treatise of Morals (sic) and underlies his argument for the conclusion that we are dealing with impressions and not ideas in the study of morality, i. e., that it is not by reason that we know an act to be right and wrong, but rather by an impression or feeling.¹¹

It is true, of course, that Hume's belief that we are dealing with sentiments and not ideas in the study of morality does rest, in part, on what Hume considers to be a psychological fact, viz., that no conditioning of human beings is possible unless that conditioning appeals to some sort of natural sentiments, but this does not mean, as Broiles insists,

¹¹Broiles, p. 71.
that having an obligation entails having a motive. In fact, according to Hume, to say of an agent that he has an obligation means that a particular proposed action is consistent with and demanded by a pattern of morally significant behavior. It is true, according to Hume, that no agent could have, and thus feel an obligation unless there were sentiments of moral approval, but this does not mean that a sentiment of moral approval is, per se, a feeling of moral obligation. To assert, as does Broiles, that obligations are motives, is to fail to distinguish between a feeling of moral approval and a feeling of moral obligation.

Kurt Baier, in his recent book, The Moral Point of View, has by implication attacked the second premise of this argument. Baier's specific analysis is a criticism of Hume's conception of 'reason'. Baier begins by asserting that:

The ordinary view of reason expressed in phrases such as "desire bade me woo her, reason made me go" could not possibly be erroneous. We mean by the word reason something that can make us do things.

Baier's point is that the ordinary meaning of 'reason', which includes such phrases as the one he quotes, is correct and inconsistent with the meaning which Hume gives to this term. Now it should be noted, initially, that Hume never pretended to be using reason in the ordinary sense; in fact, he specifically points out that the usage of 'rea-

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12Baier, p. 260.

13See p. 137 above.
son' that he is suggesting is to be distinguished from ordinary usage. It is, therefore, no argument against Hume to say, simply, that his definition is inconsistent with ordinary usage. Hume specified the meaning of reason in order to distinguish the unreasonableness of action, i.e., action prompted or directed by incorrect judgments, from action not in accordance with the pattern of morally approved behavior. Baier is quite right, Hume's use of 'reason' is contrary to ordinary usage, this alone, however, is not grounds for criticizing Hume's view.

A more substantial criticism, leveled by Baier at Hume, contends that Hume's analysis of 'reason' collapses the distinction between explanatory reasons and justificatory reasons. Baier uses for evidence of this fact the famous passage where Hume asserts that, "'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger." (T416) Baier says of this passage:

From this he draws the paradoxical conclusion that no human passion or affection or any action based on them can in any important sense be in accordance with or contrary to reason. . . . Such a view is plainly absurd. The examples he gives might even be used in teaching someone what is meant by contrary to reason.\(^1\)

Initially, it should be noted, that the 'tis not contrary' passage (as was pointed out in Chapter I above) is meant primarily as a criticism of the view held by some of Hume's predecessors that it was logically impossible to will un-

\(^1\)Baier, p. 256.
fitting acts, and self-contradictory to say that they can be willed. Further, this passage is consistent with Hume's definition of reason, for, according to Hume, to be unreasonable, an action must be based on some incorrect judgment; consequently, a preference, per se, cannot be unreasonable. Hume says:

In short, a passion must be accompany'd with some false judgment, in order to its being unreasonable; and even then 'tis not the passion, properly speaking, which is unreasonable, but the judgment. (T416)

Baier concludes, however, that Hume's specification of the meaning of 'reason' leads Hume into the curious position of collapsing the distinction between explanatory and justificatory reasons. Baier says:

How then did Hume arrive at this false conclusion? Perhaps the main reason is the unduly narrow and confused conception of what it is to have and find reasons. Hume thought that the task of reason was to find reasons, that is, to find what are the appropriate means to our ends.\(^{15}\)

Baier's analysis is again misleading. It is correct to say of Hume that an action is, in the technical sense of this term, unreasonable, only when it is based on false judgments about the means to ends or about the nature and existence of objects,\(^{16}\) but this does not imply, as Baier suggests, that Hume cannot have an analysis of the reasonableness, in the ordinary sense, of action, i.e., a sense which implies a critical appraisal of desires in terms of some general standard of reasonableness. Baier gives a

\(^{15}\)Baier, p. 261.

\(^{16}\)Note that Baier has missed this second point.
very illuminating example:

I went to the cellar to fetch the kerosine, I then poured some into a jug in order to be able to soak my hand in it. I then strike a match in order to set my hand alight. Here is a perfect chain of means-ends reasons all linked to a mad end.\footnote{Baier, p. 262.}

Baier contends that on Hume's analysis this action could be appraised only in terms of the correctness of the directive or means-ends judgments and must, therefore, be appraised as reasonable. Baier says, "We can find Hume's argument [regarding reason] plausible only if we think the sole type of reason is the means-end type."\footnote{Baier, p. 265.} Baier uses the 'hand burning' example to exemplify the absurdity of the view he ascribes to Hume, and he contends, as a consequence, that Hume's definition precludes any view of justifying reasons. Baier argues:

This brings us back to our distinction between explanatory and justificatory reasons. For even when we know one sort of explanation, one reason why he has that end (he has a guilt complex about the things he did with his hand) we still want to say, but that is no reason for setting one's hand on fire. It is an explanation of why he did it, but no justification.\footnote{Baier, p. 262.}

Hume would be the first to assert that the 'hand burning' example is a case, in the ordinary sense, of unreasonable action, but a case which, in Hume's technical vocabulary, could not be termed unreasonable.

How, then, was Baier led to this error in his analysis of Hume's conception of reason and what it is to give reasons? Baier made this error because he failed to take
into consideration any of Hume's analysis of reason except that which is concerned with reason as a motive to action. The primary purpose of Baier's argument was to try to show that Hume's conception of reason denied the possibility, not only of justification of action from a rational point of view, but, more importantly, that it denied the possibility of justification of action from the moral point of view. How, then, we should ask, does Hume's analysis allow for moral justification?

Initially, it should be noted, that in spite of the fact that there is no explicit discussion of moral justification in the Treatise, Hume's analysis of sympathy allows for justification by reason (i.e., in judgments) from the moral point of view. Such a judgment would entail an inductive inference about the occurrence of moral sentiments as they are relative to the particular action to be justified. This can, perhaps, best be seen in Hume's analysis of 'promise keeping' as discussed in Part Three of Chapter IV above.

The most significant feature of Hume's analysis of promise keeping is that the moral significance which the practice acquires, through natural manifestations of feelings of approval by the sympathy mechanism, serves, in part, as the ground for asserting that, in a particular situation, a particular agent may be said to have an obligation. Hume says, "... a sense of duty supposes an antecedent obligation, ..." (T518) (Italics mine.) Thus, in order to feel
an obligation an agent must be aware that he has an obligation, i.e., be aware that a particular action is justified from the moral point of view. Part of Hume's analysis of the sympathy mechanism is meant to show that judgments which appeal to sympathy for justification are different from judgments which point out the truth and falsity of promptive and directive judgments. The conclusions of reason, justifying action from the moral point of view, are what this thesis called 'moral judgments', i.e., inductive inferences about the occurrences of moral sentiments. It should be remembered that, according to this analysis, correct moral assertions can be made, in spite of the fact that circumstances and sympathetic reactions may vary, about the sentiments which would be felt if the 'moral perspective' could be assumed. This judgment is an inductive generalization about whether a particular action would, under standard conditions, be approved, through sympathy, by all or most men. In other words, this judgment would state whether the action was justified from a moral point of view.

Baier, in his discussion of Hume's conception of 'reason', by failing to take into consideration Hume's discussion either of the specification of the meaning of reason or of 'moral judgments' fails to see that justification of action from both the rational and moral point of view is included explicitly or implicitly in Hume's moral theory.

A third, and for the purposes of this discussion

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20See Part Three, Chapter Two.
final, criticism of this argument is included in Bernard Wand's discussion of certain concepts relative to the first premise. Wand has criticized Hume's view of the secondary motives to moral action, i.e., the motives, so-called, 'from a sense of duty'. Wand says:

... Hume's account of the nature of moral obligation breaks down at one very crucial point. As an attitude which has been developed by habit and social conditioning, Hume's view of moral obligation precludes the possibility of our recognizing after deliberate reflection that within any specific situation a certain act is right and our failure to carry it out makes us morally responsible for it.21

In other words, Wand states that since social conditioning is a necessary condition for feeling an obligation or acting from a sense of duty, according to Hume, then there is no meaningful sense in which Hume can talk about moral responsibility.

In defense of Hume against this charge, it should be noted, there is one sense of responsibility which is explicitly included in Hume's general analysis of moral action, and there is a second sense of responsibility which is implicit in Hume's analysis of moral obligation.

The first sense of responsibility is the sense which refers to 'causal agency'. On this view, to say of an agent that he is responsible for some action is to say that this agent is the cause of this action; it was he who did it. As Hume says:

Actions are by their very nature temporary and perish-

21Wand, p. 164.
ing; and where they proceed not from some cause in the characters and dispositions of the person, who perform'd them, they infix not themselves upon him, and can neither redound to his honor, if good, nor infamy, if evil. The action itself may be blameable; it may be contrary to all the rules of morality and religion: But the person is not responsible for it; and as it proceeds from nothing in him, that is constant or durable, and leaves nothing of that nature behind it, 'tis impossible he can, upon its account, become the object of punishment or vengeance. (T411)(Italics mine.)

In other words, to say, in this sense, that an agent is morally responsible for an action is to say that it is this particular agent who is deserving of praise or blame, because it was he who caused this action. It is clear, that the charge leveled by Wond, exemplified by the quotation above, must be seen as excepting this sense of responsibility.

The second sense of responsibility which is implicit in Hume's analysis of moral obligation is the sense in which it is proper to say that certain responsibilities are defined by a moral convention.

Part of the plausibility of Hume's analysis of the artificial virtues lies in his awareness that the concept of moral obligation, in this context, is only meaningful or significant provided there exists an established pattern of morally significant behavior. In other words, to say, according to Hume, that an individual has a moral obligation is to say that a particular action is demanded by a particular morally significant convention. This analysis of moral obligation does not explicitly contain any discussion of moral responsibility, though it would seem that it would allow for some analysis of responsibility as a correlative
of the obligations defined by the morally significant con-
tention. Consider, for example, the practice of promise
keeping.

Properly speaking, according to Hume, a man who
genuinely makes a promise is obliged to keep his promise,
i.e., he has a duty, defined by the convention of promise
making, to perform some particular act. It would be pos-
sible, on Hume's analysis, to say that this 'promise making'
man is responsible for the performance of this act at some
time in the future, and that he will be held responsible
for this act if he fails to perform it at the appropriate
time. To say, on this analysis, that the actor is respon-
sible for the performance in the future would be to say,
among other things, that his action in performance of his
promise is demanded by his precedent action of promise
making as defined by the convention. Similarly, he will
be held responsible for non-performance of this act at the
appropriate future time in the sense that his failure to
carry out this action makes him blameworthy, censurable,
and deserving of disapproval.22

Moreover, it was part of Hume's purpose in his anal-
ysis of the various morally significant conventions to show
that the rules of these conventions were necessarily strict;

22Hume's analysis does not include a discussion of
all the problems of moral obligation, e.g., obligations
without commitments, but insofar as his analysis does in-
clude a discussion of obligation under such practices as
promise keeping, he is not liable to Wand's broad charge.
that, in other words, the responsibilities of the agents within the convention are strictly defined. Hume notes:

'Twas, therefore, with a view to this inconvenience, [i.e., of environment, etc.] that men have establish'd those principles, and have agreed to restrain themselves by general rules, which are unchangeable by spite and favor, and by particular views of private or public interest. These rules, then, are artificially invented for a certain purpose, and are contrary to the common principles of human nature which accomodate themselves to circumstances, and have no stated invariable method of operation. (T532)

Consider Hume's classic example of the secret loan made by a miser the repayment of which would not be in the public interest. Hume's point, in this example, was to try to show that an appeal to the moral sympathy does not defeat the responsibility of the borrower in a particular case, precisely because the responsibilities of the borrower are strictly defined by the practice of promise keeping.\textsuperscript{23} As Hume says, though "... the public is no longer interested in actions of the borrower, ... I suppose there is no moralist who will affirm that the duty and obligation ceases." (T481) The reason for this is clear, if such an appeal were allowed by the practice then the miser, knowing that he was liable to lose the money by just such an appeal, could never be induced to loan the money in the beginning. This is precisely the reason why, within the convention, responsibility and obligation are strictly defined by the rules of the convention, and no appeal to the general

\textsuperscript{23} John Rawls has noticed this feature of Hume's analysis of promise keeping, in "Two Concepts of Rules", Philosophical Review, (January, 1955), 16n.
grounds which justified the convention as a whole is allowed. Responsibility is clearly defined by the practice, precisely because, without a clear definition of the character and scope of responsibility and obligation there could be no practice at all.

In more general terms, Hume's analysis of obligation, defined by an established pattern of morally significant behavior, defines a pattern of behavior compliance with which is the responsibility of any individuals who use and benefit from the long run utility of this sort of behavior. Further, to say that the individuals who use and benefit from the practice are responsible is also to say that they are blameworthy, dishonorable, and censurable insofar as they break the rules of the convention. Contra Wand, Hume's view of moral obligation clearly allows the possibility of our recognizing, after deliberate reflection, that within a specific situation a certain act is right and that our failure to carry it out makes us morally responsible for it.

What, then, is the force of Wand's assertion that, "Instead of being agents on Hume's view we are creatures, and to accept the view that every act of moral obligation must be due to the influence of others upon us is to deny the fundamental moral fact of responsibility?"24 This

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24 Wand, p. 165. Wand's charge here is a bit too strong. Hume notes that various self-interested desires, most notably 'reputation' are also factors in the development of morally correct dispositions (T501) and these conditioning factors are clearly not due to the influence of others upon us.
charge reflects, primarily, Wand's discontent with Hume's determinism. Now it should be noted, that Hume's theory of moral obligation is to some marked degree deterministic, particularly insofar as action from a sense of duty is determined by social and cultural forces, and to this degree it is liable to the charge, if in fact any form of determinism is liable to the charge, that it denies some ultimate sense of responsibility. It cannot, of course, be part of the purpose of this thesis to discuss the notably difficult issues regarding the problem of freedom and determinism. Two points concerning Hume's determinism can, however, be made. First, Hume's determinism avoids an 'extreme moral relativism' when it includes, in addition to social forces, natural feelings of sympathy and the capacity to make moral judgments, as necessary conditions for actions of moral obligations. Second, Hume's awareness that social conditioning is an important factor in moral action reflects great insight into the many social and cultural forces which doubtlessly determine a great deal of moral behavior.

In conclusion, it can properly be said that Hume's discussion of moral obligation, especially his analysis of 'having an obligation as defined by a convention' and of 'the necessity for causal agency in order to have ascription of responsibility', clearly allows considerable 'leeway' for a philosophical analysis of responsibility. Wand's charge that Hume denied moral responsibility must be modified by a philosophical analysis of the concept of respon-
sibility in conjunction with a detailed analysis of freedom and determinism, an analysis which cannot be included in this thesis.

Part Three: Conclusion.

In conclusion, what can be said about the argument discussed above? It should be clear that the conclusion of the argument exemplifies the 'psychologized' conception of moral evaluation explicit in Hume's analysis of the sympathy mechanism. In other words, Hume's theory of moral approval does not discuss and debate the legitimacy of moral judgments; rather, it merely describes the circumstances under which moral approval actually occurs. More importantly, it should be clear that the reason why Hume 'psychologized' moral evaluation is because he believed, as a matter of psychological fact, that no amount of data supplied to the mind, and no amount of conditioning by cultural and social forces will be effective unless that data or conditioning can appeal to some sort of natural sentiments. As Hume says, 'nature must furnish the materials'. As a consequence of this belief, Hume was led to the conclusion that the ultimate ground of moral evaluation must lie in natural moral sentiments. If Hume's argument is liable to criticism, that criticism must show, as a matter of psychological fact, that natural moral sentiments are not a necessary condition for the effect of moral judgments on action.
One final note on this subject, Hume's mechanistic analysis of sympathy is not, of course, very convincing to a more contemporary view, however, Hume's discussion of sympathy does point to an often unnoticed conceptual truth, that some sort of sympathy with the feelings of others is a precondition for both benevolent action and moral judgments. Part of Hume's point, in his analysis of sympathy, is that without the capacity to know that others feel as I do, without a self-conscious awareness of the feelings, emotions, pleasures, and pains of others, no moral judgments and no moral action would be possible. This is not to say that sympathetic feelings, as Hume characterized them, are the sole ground of moral distinctions, but rather that some sort of concern for, or awareness of, the conditions of others is clearly necessary if there are to be moral distinctions at all.

Granted, then, that Hume's psychologized moral evaluation, what can be said of his theory of moral obligation? One of the primary purposes of Hume's moral theory was to distinguish actions with moral significance motivated by natural moral motives or inclinations from actions with moral significance which are initially motivated by self-interest but which come to acquire artificial or secondary motives of regard to the morality of the action, and it was in his analysis of these latter motives that he enunciated his theory of moral obligation.
The analysis of moral obligation, given by Hume and discussed in Chapter IV above, showed that all actions which come to be regarded as moral are initially motivated either by natural instinctive moral motives or natural directed self-interested motives, and they are regarded as moral because they have certain consequences, viz., the production of non-sympathetic pleasure in the world. Secondarily, moral actions may be motivated by a regard to the morality of the action, i.e., by an awareness that the particular action has morally significant consequences, and is, as a result, an action consistent with the pattern of correct moral behavior. To have such a motive is to feel an obligation, and the knowledge by an agent that a particular proposed action is demanded by an established pattern of behavior, is knowledge of the fact that the agent has an obligation to perform that act. Thus, in order to feel an obligation, i.e., be motivated by the thought that a particular action is morally obligatory, the particular type of action, of which the proposed action is a token, must first have come to be regarded as moral, which presupposes acquaintance with some tokens of that type and the capacity to generalize on the information given in the occurrence of those tokens. An agent must think that he has an obligation before he can feel an obligation, and before he can think he has an obligation he must make certain moral judgments about certain token acts.
Now it is clearly very misleading to assert, as does Broiles, that, "The only reason why an agent has an obligation to do a certain act is because he has a motive to do actions of that sort." For, while Hume's discussion includes an analysis of the motives of moral obligation, this discussion also includes, explicitly, an analysis of what it is to have an obligation. In fact, Hume's whole point in his analysis of the artificial virtues was to try to show how these actions were initially motivated by self-interest in order to show how an agent could come to regard such actions as obligatory. Precedent to a feeling of obligation, there must, on Hume's analysis, be an awareness by the agent that he has an obligation defined by an established pattern of morally significant behavior. Unless this point is made clear, Hume's repeated references to the necessity for some natural motives to any morally significant actions as a prerequisite to any performance of the action from a sense of duty, become meaningless.

Now it should also be clear, that Baier's insistence that Hume collapsed the distinction between explanatory and justificatory reasons is also extremely misleading. In spite of the fact that the ultimate ground of moral evaluation, according to Hume, lies in the non-rational moral sentiments, Hume's analysis of moral obligation, granted a decision procedure for moral evaluation, allows for, especially in its reference to moral conventions and general moral rules, justification of action from a moral
point of view. Moral judgments justify action by refer-
ence to sympathetic feelings, and without the capacity to
make moral judgments and to generalize about the moral sig-
nificance of token acts, no patterns of morally significant
behavior could be recognized and no agent could ever know
that he has an obligation, know, in other words, that a
particular action is demanded by a morally significant pat-
tern of behavior, and is, thus, justified from a moral
point of view.

In conclusion, this thesis has tried to show that
Hume's discussion of the artificial virtues explicitly in-
cudes an analysis of the kinds of obligations that are
defined strictly by the rules of morally significant con-
ventions, and, as a consequence, Hume's moral theory is not
open to the extremely broad charge, exemplified above, that
no conception of obligation, justification, or responsibil-
ity is possible. This is not, however, to say that Hume's
analysis of the obligations defined by moral conventions is
as thorough and complete as would be hoped. There are, in
fact, two problems with which such a view must deal in or-
der to be complete, i. e., (1) the problem of when a partic-
ular person can be said, correctly, to subscribe to, or
be a member of, such a convention, and (2) the problem of
the extension or limits of such conventions.

Regarding the first of these problems, it should be
noted, that Hume's analysis of the convention of promise
keeping, where the commitment to the convention is quite clear, tends to obscure the more difficult cases, such as, the case of the alien's obligations to act in accordance with the rules of justice in a foreign country. In this latter case the questions of commitment to the convention are less clear than in Hume's promise keeping case.

Similarly, regarding the second of these problems, Hume's analysis does not include any discussion of the obligations of the members of a particular artificial, morally significant convention to extend the convention and its benefits to an individual who is not a member, e.g., the obligations to act justly toward an alien. In this case the questions of how, and under what circumstances, the practice may be correctly said to extend to such persons are not clear. Hume's discussion of the obligations defined by artificial conventions is inadequate to the extent that it does not include an analysis of such "hard cases" as exemplified above, though it should be clear that his discussion does not preclude such an analysis.

Further, there are, apparently, according to Hume, 'moral rules' which assert obligations which do not, like those above, define an artificial moral convention, but which reflect, in a way which Hume leaves unspecified, certain natural inclinations, such as, the desire by parents to care for their children. Hume notes, for example,

We blame a father for neglecting his child. Why? Because it shews a want of natural affection, which is
the duty of every parent. Were not natural affection a duty, the care of children cou'd not be a duty; . . . (T478) (Italics mine.)

Hume considers the character of such obligations, and the rules which assert them, to be the subject of 'practical morality', an area of study which he notes would "... require a work apart, very different from the genius of the of the present; . . ." (T621) a work which Hume, himself, never wrote. Again, it should be clear, however, that while Hume's discussion of obligation does not include an analysis of the obligations defined by such moral rules, his discussion does not preclude such an analysis.

Hume's philosophical analysis of moral obligation is far from complete, as Hume was fully aware; however, the analysis which he does offer of the obligations defined by conventions is, (1) both plausible and insightful, and (2) clear evidence that a theory of moral obligation is in no way completely precluded by his psychological analysis of moral evaluation.
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