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AN ANALYSIS OF HUME'S ARGUMENTS
CONCERNING THE ROLE OF
REASON IN MORAL DECISIONS

DISSERTATION
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for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the history of philosophy it has sometimes been the case that a philosopher has been considered to be important primarily because of the relationship he bears to some apparently greater philosopher. It was the plight of David Hume, until only recently, to have been so regarded. For Hume's importance as a philosopher was considered to lie not so much in his own philosophical doctrines, but in the effect they had on Kant, and by this means on the subsequent character of Western Philosophy. How often has it been asserted, and it is still asserted today, that you can't really understand Kant until you have studied Hume, or that Kant's main task was to overcome the scepticism of Hume, or that Hume drew the logical conclusions of empiricism and thus set the stage for Kant's critical method? How many philosophy students have answered questions like "How did Kant advance beyond Hume?" Many philosophers have come to associate Hume with Kant, and the main reason the consider Hume worthy of study, if not the only reason, is that Hume awoke Kant from his dogmatic slumbers. For example, in Alburey Castell's Introduction to Modern Philosophy, in a section entitled "From Hume to Kant", he relates the two philosophers in this manner. "What Hume did, in effect, was to take Locke's appeal to experience and push it to its logical conclusion. This conclusion was that much of the familiar furniture of man's world was dissolved into a series of question marks... These conclusions, which filled Hume with grave doubts about the
whole epistemological enterprise, were meanwhile being read and digested by the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant. They did not fill his mind with any fright and confusion. Their effect was, to quote his well known words, 'to rouse me from my dogmatic slumbers' .... Hume's conclusions served only to convince Kant that unrelieved empiricism must somehow be a mistaken hypothesis." No wonder the Treatise fell stillborn from the press; Kant was not there to read it.

The rise of empiricism in the twentieth century brought with it a revival of interest in Hume. But this interest was, until only recently, centered around the epistemological problems Hume dealt with. Hume's ethics received little attention in this revival of interest in his epistemological works. His ethics was considered, and is still considered by many, as a work written for the eighteenth century English gentleman, or as a work which had a great influence on Bentham, or as one which maintained the amusing thesis that reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions, and this thesis can be suitably contrasted with Kant. But just as interest in Hume's epistemology grew, so did interest in his ethics, until now one can hardly find a recent book on moral philosophy that does not devote some space to Hume. Though many teachers, and some histories of philosophy, still treat Hume as the culmination of Locke and Berkeley, and the precursor of Kant, Hume has finally achieved the acclaim he so desired. And nowhere is this more true than in the field of ethics. Hume's ethics is appealed to as the source of arguments, inspirations, insights, or errors on many of the main issues.

occupying the attention of contemporary ethicists. Some of the emotivists, for example, claim only to be carrying out Hume's method. "Apart from my emphasis on language," Stevenson points out, "my approach is not dissimilar to that of Hume." The intuitionists, on the other hand, find in Hume an argument against the naturalist in the famous "is-ought" passage. A. N. Prior, in discussing the issue of naturalism versus anti-naturalism, contends "that almost all that can be said, from a purely logical point of view, on the issue between naturalism and anti-naturalism, has already been said in two quite brief sections in Hume's Treatise of Human Nature (II, iii. 3, and III, i. 1) and in one quite brief chapter in Reid's Essay on the Active Powers." R.M. Hare refers to this passage in the Treatise as "Hume's law", while P. H. Nowell-Smith, in his book Ethics, finds Hume's argument in the above passage an adequate refutation of both naturalism and intuitionism. Not to be outdone, even the naturalist appeal to Hume as embodying the first clear statement of the utilitarian position. And finally, even the most up-to-date brand of utilitarianism, Rule or Restricted Utilitarianism, has its basis, according to John Rawls, in Hume's distinction between natural and artificial virtues.

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With so many different views claiming some support from Hume one would readily suppose Hume to be radically inconsistent. But this would be too hasty a conclusion to draw. The present fashion of doing philosophy is to deal with small problems. If we can clear up some of the basic issues, without trying to do too much at once, maybe we will make some progress in these matters, or at least make fewer mistakes. Consider the many articles and books on the place of reason in ethics, free will and determinism, and naturalism and anti-naturalism. Hume is a ready source of arguments and insights on these problems. One should not conclude from the many different positions ethicists find in Hume that his work is just a maze of contradictions or a hodgepodge of many different views. It is, rather, a work containing many arguments which have been isolated and used in discussions of various problems. This approach is true of the Treatise as a whole and is not peculiar to the Book of Morals. Think of all the sections that are seldom discussed in Book I of the Treatise. Hardly anyone is familiar with Hume's work on space and time. Further, who even reads Book II, On the Passions, with the exceptions of the sections on "Liberty and Necessity" and "Of the Influencing Motives of the Will." Hume, unlike most great philosophers, is studied piece-meal. The reason for this is that Hume has arguments which can be used, out of context, in the discussion of a wealth of philosophical problems. It is with one of these problems, the place of reason in moral decisions, on which Hume has been so influential
in contemporary ethical discussions, that this work is concerned.

In this work I shall be concerned with Hume's arguments concerning the respective roles of reason and passion in our moral decisions. Rachael Mary Kydd, in her excellent study of _Reason and Conduct in Hume's Treatise_, has argued, and convincingly I believe, that Hume tends to overstate his position, with regard to the role of reason in moral decisions, and what his famous dictum, "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions and can never pretend to any office than to serve and obey them," is misinterpreted if it is read so as to exclude completely the influence of reason in our moral choices. Hume does not hold such a position, for he contends that reason does affect conduct in an oblique or indirect manner in so far as it determines the appropriate means to an end or determines whether an end exists or not. But Mrs. Kydd's work, for all of its scholarship, lacks any thorough or critical analysis of some of Hume's basic arguments. She seems, possibly because she basically is in agreement with Hume's conclusions, to overlook the arguments that lead to these conclusions


6All references to the Treatise are from the L.A. Selby-Bigge edition (London: Oxford Press, 1958) and the page numbers of the quotes, which will be included in the text rather than being footnoted at the bottom of the page, refer to this edition. All references to the Enquiry are from the Selby-Bigge edition (London: Oxford Press, 1902) and will have an "E" before the page number.
and fails to point out how certain ideas in Hume's ethics, like his conception of what it is to be a motive to an action, or a cause of an action, or a reason for an action, are to be interpreted or made clear and how they are related to his conclusions. In this work I hope to go beyond her work, or, more appropriately, to supplement her work, by critically analyzing the basic concepts in Hume's arguments concerning the role of reason in moral decisions. One might say that while Mrs. Kydd is primarily concerned to get Hume's conclusions straight, I am primarily concerned with getting his arguments straight. Certainly the two tasks cannot be completely separated, but I believe that while Hume's conclusions are sufficiently obvious, his arguments for them are not. I believe that an understanding of certain basic notions in Hume will provide an explanation of why he came to the conclusions he did come to. I shall not be concerned with giving a detailed exposition or interpretation of all of Book III, but rather I shall try to point out that certain basic assumptions underlie the whole of his discussion on morals, and that by understanding these one is able to see how his work developed from these ideas, both with regard to the organization of the Book and the conclusions he draws.

My attention will be centered around Book III, Part I, section I, "Moral distinctions not derived from Reason," but in trying to understand the arguments presented in this section I shall have to consider all of the important sections of Books II and III. The main argument of section I runs as follows:
1) Moral judgments, rules, and precepts excite passions and produce or prevent actions.

2) Reason, by itself, does not excite passions or produce or prevent actions.

3) Therefore, the rules of morality are not conclusions of our reason.

In Chapter III I shall consider the second premise of this argument and this will take us into Book II of the Treatise and to the considerations in the section "of the influencing motives of the will." This will involve a rather detailed discussion of the previously quoted "slave" passage. I shall try to point out in this chapter that Hume is confused in his view of reason as determining only means to an end and that this confusion arises from considering all actions as directed towards ends, and that ends are "justified" only by being desired, and that no reasons can be given to "justify" the choice of one end over another. Chapter IV will deal with the first premise of Hume's argument, and here I shall have to consider Hume's discussion of "Liberty and Necessity" and his discussion of the artificial virtues. Here the fundamental concern will be to analyze Hume's notion of what a motive is, what it means to have a reason for doing an action, and his considerations of the relation of motivation and obligation.

In Chapter V I shall examine Hume's arguments against the rationalists and show how they rest on Hume's main argument concerning the inability of reason to move us to action. Here we shall briefly consider his moral sense theory as a conclusion of his arguments against
the rationalists. Finally, in Chapter VI, I shall show that the now popular interpretation of the famous "is-ought" passage misconstrues the problem Hume is dealing with and does not represent Hume's meaning because the passage is read out of context. I shall show that this passage was not intended to assert that from factual premises alone one cannot derive moral conclusions, but deals with the broader problem of the relation of motivation to duty.

Thus, though I shall be concerned primarily with the arguments of section I, I shall have to take into account the basic arguments and conclusions of the rest of Book III and also some of the sections of Book II. I shall devote particular attention to Part II of Book III, "Of Justice and Injustice", because this section, as we will see, is very closely connected with the considerations of section I. I shall try to avoid the piecemeal interpretation of Hume and believe that Hume can be made consistent in his conclusions, though, as I shall try to show, his conclusions are incorrect because of certain fundamental misconceptions in the premises of his main argument. I shall argue that Hume's conclusions arise from a fundamental misconception with regard to what it means to ask for, or give, a reason for taking a particular course of action. I shall try to show that Hume collapses the important distinction between exciting and justifying reasons and that he does not make the distinction between giving a reason for an action by pointing out the agent's motives or the causes of his actions, and, on the other hand, giving a reason for an
an action by pointing out that the course of action taken was that course of action supported by the best reasons. As Hume saw it, the only type of reason for doing an action was the former kind, an exciting or explanatory reason, and only because he ruled out the latter kind, justifying reasons, does he come up with the conclusion that reason can never justify ends or move us to action. I shall, then, try to point out that Hume's arguments for the subservience of reason to passion are unsound and fail to establish his point. And further, I shall try to point out how these arguments arise from Hume's confusion with regard to certain basic concepts in his system, and how these misconceptions give rise to the major conclusions of the Treatise on Morals.
HUME'S PREDECESSORS

Any examination of a philosopher should take into account the discussions, controversies, and positions of the various philosophers of his time. Doing this serves two useful functions. First of all, one has less of a tendency to read the philosopher in light of contemporary problems and thus avoids making the philosopher studied the espouser of the latest positions in the field. I have the impression, from reading many commentaries on various philosophers, that the commentators have the feeling that their endeavors are really justified only if they can show that the man they are commenting on has something to say concerning the latest disputes in the field. I do not have this feeling. Nor do I believe that Hume has anything to say about most of the major problems dealt with by contemporary ethicists. He was, probably, unaware of many of the problems in ethics as they are discussed today. For example, Hume, as I mentioned, is appealed to in many writings on the naturalists versus anti-naturalists controversy. I shall try to show that this appeal to Hume is unjustified, in the sense that Hume himself has very little to say with regard to this controversy. Thus, the first advantage in considering Hume's predecessors is that it should at least help us to avoid reading Hume out of the context of the problems discussed by his contemporaries. The
second advantage of a section on Hume's predecessors is that many of Hume's arguments are directed against the rationalists, and these arguments can only be understood if one has some knowledge of their positions.

It is not one of my aims, in this chapter, to give a definitive account of the controversies and problems dealt with by British moralists in the eighteenth century. I shall only try to point out the problem, as discussed by Hume's predecessors, of what role reason plays in our moral judgments. By doing this one at least attempts to avoid the mistake made by the piecemeal readers of Hume who carry contemporary problems to his arguments, and thus misinterpret his meaning. The second purpose of this section will be to specify the doctrines Hume attacked in the Treatise on Morals in section I. I shall not, then, try to give a full account of the eighteenth century British moralists. I shall only point out those discussions and positions relevant to my discussions of the role of reason in moral judgments.

A. An historical reminder

With the coming of the reformation and the breaking up of the church with the formation of many sects, the question of what is the nature of the distinction between good and evil became a very live one. The authority of the Church was no longer unchallenged, so that there were many conflicting views as to what the nature of this distinction might be. The answer to the question "What should I do?"
could no longer be simply "Do God's will". There was no longer any univocal voice representing God's will. If one authority proclaims God's will as one thing, while another claims it to be just the opposite, then we must have some way of deciding which, if either, is proclaiming God's will. One way of deciding is to hold that "Do God's will" means "do good acts and avoid evil ones". God wills that we do what is good. But then one needs to know the distinction between good and evil before one can determine what God wills. One can see, then, how it is that moral questions, by the seventeenth century, rivalled logical and metaphysical concerns at the center of philosophical controversy.

Further, the decay of authority also brought with it the decay of the legalistic conception of the moral order. Even if God gives laws, which are to be followed, the question has been raised as to how we are to know what these commands are. This brings forward the contention that if it is necessary for men to know right from wrong in order to know God's will, then what God wills is willed, and is good, because it conforms to what is good, and it is not good just because God wills it. And thus, the moral law, the eighteenth century moralists argue, is independent of will. It is not only independent of God's will, but also independent of men's wills, and much attention is devoted to the latter conception, and to the refutation of Hobbes and the self-interest theory. This brings to light one of the main
assumptions of the eighteenth century moralists. Morality is in some way associated with nature, either with regard to the nature of things or the nature of the soul.

With the decay of the legalistic conception, where God was the lawgiver and enforcer, it became necessary to find a new means by which one could distinguish right from wrong and to find new sanctions for moral convictions. Most moral philosophers wanted to show that these moral convictions were founded upon real distinctions and not just arbitrary whims of either God's or man's will. Thus we have an immense concern with the problems of morality in eighteenth century philosophical discussions, and the problem really is, "How . . . should morality survive theology?" The questions that permeate the ethical discussions of the British moralists are, "how is it possible to know the difference between right and wrong, and what is the nature of this distinction"; and, secondly, "why should I do what is right if it is not in my own interest?" It is with the answers to these questions, given by the eighteenth century British moralists, that we now must turn our attention.

B. The rationalists

As the religious sects ramified and opinions grew more diverse, it was necessary to fall back further than scripture for a principle.

common to all. The antidote found to the diversity of faiths was reason. Since this was the solution offered by the rationalists we shall consider them first. I shall contrast the rationalists with the sentimentalists later on, but both schools held in common that virtue was real and worth pursuing in itself, and that virtue is natural and according to nature is an article of faith with both schools. The rationalists try to show that virtue is real and natural by relating it to the nature of things, while the sentimentalists relate it to human nature.

The ethical rationalism of the Greeks was first carried over into British moral philosophy by Ralph Cudworth. He attempted to show that moral good and evil, justice and injustice, could not possibly be arbitrary things. He was opposed to Hobbes' contention that morality depended on a contract made by men, and likewise opposed the religious view that morality depended on God's will. These moral distinctions cannot be made by will without nature, because "it is universally true, that things are what they are, not by will but by nature." Nothing will make a thing white but whiteness, round but

\[2\text{Ibid., Vol. I, p. 77.}\]

\[3\text{Ralph Cudworth, "A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality", British Moralists, vol. II, edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge, (Oxford Press, 1897) p. 247. All of the references in this chapter to the original sources are taken from the Selby-Bigge two volume edition of the works of the eighteenth century British Moralists. The page numbers refer to the page numbers in this edition.}\]
roundness, red but redness. Not even an omnipotent will can make a body triangular, he argued, without it having the nature and properties of triangle in it. It could not do this except by implying a contradiction, i.e., that things should be what they are not. "And the reason is the same for all other things, as just and unjust; for everything is what it is immutably by the necessity of its own nature; neither is it any derogation at all from the Power of God to say, that he cannot make a thing to be that which it is not." 4

By means of this sort of Platonic consideration, Cudworth has tried to point out that the distinction between vice and virtue is a natural one, and that a thing is good, for example, if it partakes of the eternal and immutable nature of goodness. But, one might ask, how do we have knowledge of these eternal and immutable natures that particulars partake of? Cudworth points out that

... there is a superior power of Intellection and knowledge of a different Nature from sense, which is not terminated in mere seeming and appearance only, but in the truth and reality of things, and reaches to the comprehension of that which really and absolutely is, whose objects are the eternal and immutable essences and natures of things and their unchangeable relations to one another. 5

This distinctive mode of knowing, which differs from sensory knowledge and discursive reasoning, is later called, by Richard Price, Rational Intuition.

4 Ibid. p. 255.
Cudworth's answers to the main questions posed by the further investigation into moral problems were these: Reason guides human conduct by means of immediate rational perception of right and wrong. This is how we know what we ought to do. At the basis of all duty there must be a rational perception. Cudworth's position here is of some significance. He is claiming that moral knowledge is a priori. It is neither empirical nor demonstrative. When he claims that moral knowledge is a priori knowledge we must not construe this as meaning that it is absolutely certain knowledge. He would not deny that it is often hard to know what one ought to do. But his point is that we do decide what to do by knowing that an act is right, and this type of knowledge is not empirical knowledge, and this decision is one that does not rest merely upon one's feelings. It is by means of reason, and not sense, that we distinguish good from evil. But even if I see that I ought to keep by promises, for example, why should I do this? Why do what is right? In answer to this Cudworth contends that the soul is not just passive and receptive, but has an innate active principle of its own, by which it strives toward what it regards as good. Reason supplies its own motive to action.

In furthering the rationalists' position Samuel Clarke advanced the thesis that iniquity is contradiction. He held that judgments about rightness and wrongness were a priori, being determined by whether an act was fitting to the circumstances or not. The doing
of unfitting acts and omitting of doing fitting ones is to behave in a self-contradictory manner. He contends that the eternal and necessary differences of things make it fit and reasonable for creatures so to act; they cause it to be their duty, or lay an obligation upon them, so to do, even separate from considerations of these rules being the positive will or command of God, and also antecedent to any respect or regard, expectation or apprehension, of any particular private and personal advantage or disadvantage. . .

The above passage points out what I believe to be the three main tenets of eighteenth century rationalist moral theory. Clarke affirms that moral characters are eternal and immutable; that duty arises from reason; and that this obligation is incumbent upon us free from God's will and independently of the selfish theory of morals.

"Tis undeniably more fit, and absolutely in the nature of the thing itself," Clarke points out, "that all men should endeavor to promote the universal good and welfare of all than that all men should be continually contriving the ruin and destruction of all."? How do we know when one act is more fitting than another? We know a priori the difference between right and wrong, and to deny these moral truths is like denying the truths of geometry or arithemetic, i.e., is to involve oneself in a contradiction. He believes that "... the unprejudiced mind of Man, as naturally disapproves injus-


Ibid., p. 5.
tice in moral matters, as in natural things it cannot but dissent from falsehood, or dislike congruities."

But if men can so easily determine what is right, why do they ever do what is wrong? And this brings in the rationalists' point that passions and desires go against reason and sometimes cause a man to act irrationally. There is a conflict between reason and passion, and the reasonable thing to do is what should be done. When, in making moral decisions, one follows his desires rather than reason, he is opposing reason in his actions. If we know an act is right or fitting, but do another act instead, this is as though we were to know that $2 + 2 = 4$, and yet when we ask the grocer for two apples and two oranges, we demanded there be five pieces of fruit in our bag. The self-contradictory aspect of the immoral man is that his actions contradict what reason apprehends as true. This is certainly how Hume interpreted the rationalists' contention that immorality is self-contradiction. Since the rationalists held that it was because of our desires that we contradict reason, we must overcome our desires if we are to be moral. But one might want to contend that just because reason says a course of action is the morally right one, if this course of action is not in my own interest, or conflicts with my desires, then I would be a

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8Ibid., p. 21.
fool to follow reason. We know why men are sometimes evil, why are they ever moral? Clarke's answer is that it is natural that the will should be determined by reason, and as men are conscious of what is right and wrong, so far are they under an obligation to act accordingly. As Clarke put it,

For originally and in reality tis as natural and (morally speaking) necessary, that the will should be determined in every action by the reason of the thing, and the right of the case, as tis natural and (absolutely speaking) necessary, that the understanding should submit to necessary truth.9

All willful wickedness and perversion of right is as absurd in moral matters as it would be, in natural things, to pretend to have altered the proportion of numbers.

By the Reason of his mind, he cannot but be compelled to own and acknowledge, that there is really such an obligation indissolubly incumbent upon him, even at the same time that in the actions of his life he is endeavoring to throw it off and despise it.10

The original obligation of morality, then, is deduced from the nature of things, discovered by the understanding, and not founded in the mere will and power of God.

Clarke believed then that moral distinctions were eternally and immutably founded in the nature of things, the right or wrong course of action being determined by the fitness of the action to the natural relations of things. Reason apprehends the fitness of an

9Ibid., p. 13.

10Ibid., p. 16.
action just as it apprehends the necessary truths of arithmetic.
And the awareness of the rightness of an action carries with it its
own obligation, because reason naturally should control our passions
and has the power to do this if men will only let it. On all of these
points the sentimentalists are in direct disagreement with the ra-
tionalists. But, before dealing with the sentimentalists, I would
like to mention one more rationalist, William Wollaston.

Wollaston thought moral propositions capable of demonstration.
All acts have a significance, he argues, such that they imply a pro-
position, just as if it had been stated in words. "Truth is but a
conformity to nature: and to follow nature cannot be to combat Truth."11

Now, if what an act declares to be is not really the case, then the
act contradicts truth, just as much as any false proposition or asser-
tion can.

I lay this down as a fundamental maxim, that whoever acts
as if things were so, or not so, doth by his acts declare,
that they are so or not so; as plainly as he could by words,
and with more reality. And if the things are otherwise, his
acts contradict those propositions, which assert them to be
as they are.12

When I beat my wife I assert that she is not my wife, which contra-
dicts the truth. As Leslie Stephens put it, "Thirty years of profound
meditation had convinced Wollaston that the reason why a man should

11 William Wollaston, The Religion of Nature Delineated, vol.II,
p. 364.
12 Ibid., p. 364
abstain from breaking his wife's head was, that it was denying she was his wife."\(^{13}\)

Now there are certainly a few difficulties in Wollaston's ethics. But I mention him because he points out the rationalists conception of the relation of morality to truth and nature. To be moral is to affirm the truth, and truth is but the conformity to nature. Morality is founded in nature. "To deny things to be as they are is a trangression of the great law of our nature, the law of reason."\(^{14}\) The rationalists held, as seen in this brief survey, that moral distinctions were eternally and immutably founded in the nature of things. An act was morally right when it conformed to nature. Reason revealed to us these moral truths and we see by its means the rightness or wrongness of a course of action. Immorality is the result of the opposition or contradiction of an act to reason. If the agent's action is not the one dictated by reason then he can be said to be acting in a self-contradictory manner. The notion of contradiction in the rationalists' systems is different from Kant's later use of this notion when he used it to express the self destructive character of the agent's maxims. For the rationalists "contradiction" might be better expressed by the phrase "not acting in accord with what reason dictates as the right course of action." Reason also provides a motive for the agent to do what is right, for in seeing that an action is right we are forced to acknowledge it as our duty.


Reason, then, should control our will and determine it to act even when these actions go against our desires or inclinations. Reason is and ought only to be the master of the passions. But not all agreed with the rationalists on these points. And some of the main points of disagreement were over whether it was by reason that we discover moral qualities, and whether reason did in fact conflict with the passions in such a manner as to be able to be their master. Could reason, by itself, discern the moral distinctions and move one to action? The sentimentalists thought not. We must now consider their position.

C. The sentimentalists

The main disagreement between the rationalists and sentimentalists, as their names imply, is the role they see reason playing in moral decisions. It is only on this point that I wish to dwell, and thus what follows is in no way intended to summarize the positions of the various philosophers.

The Third Earl of Shaftesbury held that morals could be founded on human nature, in contrast to the rationalists contention that morals were founded on the nature of things. An agent is good or bad, Shaftesbury maintains, according as he has the affections of benevolence and self-love in the right proportion. "Since it is by Affection merely that a creature is esteemed good or ill, natural or unnatural, our business will be, to examine which are the good and natural, and which the ill and unnatural affections."\(^{15}\) In contrast to the rationalists

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contention that the right of an action depends on its truth, or accord-
dance with the nature of things, Shaftesbury contends that the action
itself is not what is good or bad. Rather it is the feeling or mo-
tive the agent has in doing the act that determines whether the agent
is good or not. The nature of virtue, according to Shaftesbury,

consistent in a certain just disposition, or proportionable
affection of a rational creature towards the moral objects
of right or wrong. \(^\text{16}\)

Virtue is not a matter of deeds alone, but involves having the right
affections also. We should always try to bring about the greatest
good for the species as a whole. With this the rationalists would
agree. But Shaftesbury contends that reason only discovers (empiri-
cally) what actions would do this, while the moral goodness arises
only if this action is done from the right affections. Thus, and
this is where Shaftesbury and the rationalists disagree, an action
is good or evil, not because it accords with what reason dictates,
but only in so far as the action is performed from the proper affec-
tions. In praising or blaming an agent we say the agent is morally
good or praiseworthy because he has acted from the proper affections.
It seems to me that the discrepancy between Shaftesbury and the ra-
tionalists arises from the former's concern with the praiseworthiness
or blameworthiness of the agent, while the latter is concerned with

\(^{16}\text{Ibid., p. 18.}\)
the rightness or wrongness of the act. But be that as it may, Shaftesbury is contending, as opposed to the rationalists, that morality is not founded in the nature of things but rather is founded in human nature. But even though morality is no longer related to the nature of things and truth, it is important to notice that nature is still the key concept, because the affections we approve are the natural ones and it is by fulfilling the nature of the soul, i.e., by having a right proportion of our natural affections, that we are deemed moral. Nature is still the important concept, but now it is the nature of the soul and natural affections.

Book II of Shaftesbury's Inquiry investigates what obligation there is to virtue, and what reasons to embrace it. Hobbes is certainly the target in this section, for Shaftesbury wants to prove that to be well affected towards the public interests is not inconsistent with self-interest, and, in fact, the two are inseparable. Shaftesbury attempts to prove,

I. That to have the Natural, kindly, or generous affections strong and powerful towards the Good of the public, is to have the chief means and power of self-enjoyment. And, that the want of them, is certain misery and Ill.
II. That to have the private or self-affections too strong, or beyond their degree of subordinacy to the kindly and natural, is also miserable.\textsuperscript{17}

This attempt to prove the supremacy of benevolent affections is interesting for several reasons. First, it points out the assumption

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 33.
that carries through the sentimentalists' position that the agent will act when he has a motive for so acting, i.e., when one has a natural disposition to desire to do acts of a certain type. Shaftesbury is trying to prove, against Hobbes, that it is just as natural to be concerned for others as to be concerned for oneself. But his attempt to prove this is surely peculiar. He tries to show that there are affections which are not self-interested, and that we should follow these affections. And his proof is that it is in one's own interest to follow these altruistic affections. This points out the second reason for mentioning this section. Butler, we shall see, straightens out this inconsistency in Shaftesbury by distinguishing between self-interest, which has as its object the general desire for the agent's happiness, and self-interest which has a particular object, e.g., sex, food, etc., that it desire. And it is Butler who is generally credited with refuting Hobbes. But Shaftesbury has exemplified the two main points of difference between the rationalists and sentimentalists. He has switched moral considerations from the nature of things to the nature of the soul, and has thus changed the respective roles of reason and passion. No longer is there a conflict between reason and passion, and goodness depends not so much on truth as on right affections.

Secondly, since the goodness of an action depends on the affections of the agent, and since it is by following his natural affections that the agent is morally praiseworthy, and since there would be no
foundation for moral distinctions were there not these natural affections, we can see that moral goodness, or the agent's duty, arises only where there do happen to be natural affections that would cause the agent to act, and that where there are no such affections there can be no moral obligation. Shaftesbury assumes, as all the sentimentalists do, that there must be a motive for any action to be done, and this implies, as I just pointed out, that one has no obligation to do an action unless he has a motive or affection, which arises naturally, for doing an action of that kind.

Joseph Butler agreed with Shaftesbury that morality was founded on human nature, and held that virtue consisted in a sort of harmony of the soul. And Butler clearly saw his break with the rationalists on this point. In the preface to his *Sermons* he points out that

> There are two ways in which the subject of morals can be treated. One begins from inquiring into the abstract relations of things; and the other from a matter of fact, namely, what the particular nature of man is, its several parts, their economy or constitution; and from whence it proceeds to determine what course of life it is which is correspondent to this whole nature.¹⁸

Butler notes, in his analysis of human nature, that mankind has various instincts and principles of action, some leading to the good of the community, and some leading to the private good. The task he puts

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to himself, is to show that "... self-love and benevolence, virtue and interest, are not to be opposed but only to be distinguished from each other."\(^{19}\)

In Hutcheson and Hume we find a real acknowledged disagreement with the rationalists. In Shaftesbury and Butler the disagreement is more directly with Hobbes and the self-interest theory. Hobbes had argued that what man did, by nature, was to seek to fulfill his own interests. And this assumes that there is no reason that can be given that will show an action to be the agent's duty when the action is not in his own interest. The self-interest theory held that men were naturally moved to do actions that were in their own interests. But it really holds much more than this. It assumes that men will only perform these actions that are naturally moved to perform. And then it grasps the obvious fact that men are moved by considerations of their own interests. The self-interest theory holds that this is the only thing men are naturally moved towards. Though Butler and Shaftesbury disagree with this last assertion, they do not question the fundamental assumption that men will only do those actions which they are naturally moved to do. This same assumption underlies most eighteenth century ethical discussions and Shaftesbury and Butler both argue that it is not natural to seek to fulfill only self-interested desires, but that

\(^{19}\textit{Tbid.}, p. 15.\)
it is just as natural to have benevolent desires, and far from the two being incompatable, they both serve to form a harmonious union of the soul and the reward is a happy life. They try to prove that men have a natural disposition, a propensity or an affection, towards the well being of their fellow men. Shaftesbury and Butler would both agree that if men lacked these desires then Hobbes would be right, and there would be no reason for men to act so as to insure the general well being apart from considerations of self-interest. Benevolence, we all agree, is good. But it is only good if there is a natural desire or affection to seek to bring about the general well being. Now, in order for us to say that any desire is natural it must be the case that men are moved towards its object, i.e., we have a desire to perform actions that bring about a certain state. Since they hold that benevolence is natural we must be moved to act towards the general well being. But, if the economy of nature is such that there cannot be conflicting propensities or desires, both of which are natural to the soul, and since the soul does seek its own well being, we must show how there can be a desire for the general well being which is distinct from self-interest, and which does not conflict with self-interest. And this is the task of Butler's *Sermons*, to show that Self-Love and Benevolence are distinct desires of the soul, that both are natural to the soul, and that they are not necessarily in conflict.

Butler tries to make these points by pointing out that the object of self-love is the general well-being of the self, while the object
of benevolence is the general well being of society. Now, there are, below these general affections, particular affections or appetites with particular objects, e.g., sex, food, etc. Now these do conflict with each other, but it is by means of the more general dispositions of self-love and benevolence that these conflicts are resolved. By distinguishing these general desires from desires that have particular objects, we can see that self-love and benevolence do not have objects such that we can have one only with the exclusion of the other. Our desires for our own good, and for the general well-being, both can be fulfilled, and Butler concludes, "... it is as manifest that we were made for society and to promote the happiness of it, as that we were intended to take care of our own life and health and private good." It is not to my purpose to consider Butler's arguments here. What is important is that the relation between nature and morality be brought out so as to make clear that the underlying assumption of both Butler and Shaftesbury is that for an agent to have a moral obligation to do any act he must have a natural disposition towards doing acts of that kind.

One further point should be made about Butler. It concerns his doctrine of conscience, and the discussion serves as a useful transition to Hutcheson's moral sense theory. Butler does not believe, though he sometimes implies it, that benevolence and self-love never

\[20\text{Ibid., p. 27.}\]
conflict. They surely do. How should we resolve this conflict? Which is the stronger desire? Neither is stronger than the other and one does not rule the other. But both are ruled by conscience. The nature of the soul, then, is to have particular affections, secondly, benevolence and self-love, and thirdly,

there is a principle of reflection in men by which they distinguish between, approve and disapprove, their own action... This principle in man by which he approves or disapproves his heart, temper, and actions, is conscience.21

Conscience has the power to distinguish good from evil, and it has the natural authority to move us to do good and avoid evil. "Men follow nature when they act in accord with the faculty which has natural supremacy; which surveys, approves or disapproves the several affections of our minds or actions."22 And this is really a change from the rationalists with regard to the role reason plays in moral decisions. For according to the rationalists, to do good was to act in accordance with truth, and there was a criterion by which we could decide what was good and what bad. But the sentimentalists, as seen in Butler's concept of conscience, and as fully developed in Hutcheson's and Hume's moral sense theories, have substituted a faculty for a criterion. In Hutcheson and Hume this faculty which distinguishes what is good from what is evil, and which is the source of our approval and disapproval,

22 Ibid., p. 38.
is founded in our passional nature and is not a function of reason. Butler, however, is not clear on whether this is a faculty of reason or sense. He seems to think it is both when he says, in his Dissertation upon the Nature of Virtue, that

It is manifest great part of common language, and of common behavior over the world, is formed upon the supposition of such a moral faculty, whether called conscience, moral reason, moral sense, of divine reason; whether considered as a sentiment of the understanding or as a perception of the heart, or, which seems the truth, as including both.23

But we see in Butler that reason no longer plays the role in distinguishing good from evil that it played in the rationalists' theories. And this position is fully developed in the moral sense theory which we are now to consider.

Francis Hutcheson's moral sense theory exemplifies most clearly the sentimentalist's tendency to substitute a faculty for a criterion, and to identify this faculty with a sense. He stands in direct contrast to Clarke and directs several criticisms against the rationalist's position. Hutcheson, in An Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil, sets out to prove that some actions have an immediate goodness and that by a moral sense we perceive pleasures in the contemplation of these actions and are determined to love the agent; and that what excites us to these actions is a principle entirely different from self-interest. "It is plain we have some secret Sense which determine our approbation without

23 Ibid., p. 82.
regard to self-interest;" Hutcheson contends, "otherwise we should always favor the fortunate side without regard to virtue, and suppose ourselves engaged with that party."\(^{24}\) He means by a moral sense "only a Determination of our minds to receive amiable or disagreeable Ideas of actions, when they occur to our observation, antecedent of any Opinions of Advantage or Loss. . . ."\(^{25}\) Against Hobbes, or more specifically Mandeville, who argued that morality was not a natural product, Hutcheson argues that there is a moral faculty that approves and disapproves certain actions irrespective of whether they are associated with one's own interest or not. The moral sense serves to approve ends. For example, Hutcheson believes that "that action is best which procures the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers; and that, worst, which, in like manner, occasions misery."\(^{26}\) The justification of this principle is that the moral sense perceiving it is good to act according to this principle. There are not other possible reasons that can be given as a justification of this principle, we sense that it is true. We would never approve of such behavior unless there were this faculty by which we perceive the goodness of acts performed in accord with this principle, and we would never act on such a principle did we not naturally approve of benevolence. The moral sense then serves to justify certain principles of action, certain ends.

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\(^{25}\)Ibid., p. 83.

\(^{26}\)Ibid., p. 107.
What then is the place of reason in this theory? If it is by a
sense that we determine what ends are approved then reason cannot serve
to justify the ends. Reason serves a subordinate function. It discovers
the means to fulfill these ends. "What is Reason but the Sagacity
we have in prosecuting any end?"27 It is by means of moral sense that
we approve of promoting the public good, but "... the use of our rea­
son is as requisite to find the proper means of promoting public Good,
as private Good."28 This thesis is familiar to anyone who has read Hume.
Reason cannot justify ends, but functions to discover the means to ful­
fill these ends, and only in an indirect way can reason effect moral
approval and disapproval. Reason, according to Hutcheson, and in con­
trast to the rationalists, is not the means by which we make moral dis­
tinctions, and is not the ultimate ground of justification of our moral
principles or ends.

But Hutcheson does not stop here. Reason is not only incapable
of justifying moral decisions, it is also incapable of moving us to per­
form actions. Reason cannot provide an exciting reason, has no influence
upon the will, and cannot create an obligation. Hutcheson argues that,

If by obligation we understand a determination without regard
to our own interest, to approve actions, and to perform them;
which determination shall also make us displeased with our­selves and, uneasy upon having acted contrary to it; on this
meaning of the word obligation there is naturally an obligation
upon all men of benevolence; and they are still under its influ­
ence, even when, by false, or partial opinions of the natural
tendency of their actions, the moral sense leads them to evil;

27Ibid., p. 115.
28Ibid.
unless by long inveterate habits it be exceedingly weakened.
For it scarce seems possible wholly to extinguish it. 29

Notice again the assumption that moral obligation depends upon natural determination. And here it is explicit, there is no obligation upon the agent unless he has a motive or some kind of natural determination to approve or disapprove acts of a certain kind. Reason by itself can provide no such motive or determination, only passions can. The reason for helping a neighbor in distress is that we should be concerned about the well-being of our neighbors. But one might still not want to help one's neighbors, and Hutcheson believes that unless there were a natural determination, which there is, towards doing this type of action, there would be no obligation. Reason, then, fails not only to provide a justifying reason, but it fails, and what seems more important to Hutcheson, to provide an exciting reason. It is upon these two points that Hutcheson's whole attack against the rationalists rest. I shall now consider his arguments and this will clearly point out the difference between the rationalists and the sentimentalists with regard to the place of reason in moral decisions, and will allow us better to understand Hume's arguments and position with regard to this controversy.

One can find in Hutcheson three basic criticisms of the rationalists. All three concern the role of reason in moral judgements. He argues that (1) the rationalists do not provide an adequate criterion as they claim they do; (2) that the use of 'fittingness', a relative term,

29Ibid., p. 153. (underlines mine)
is inappropriate since ultimate ends cannot be fit for anything else; and (3) that reason discovers nothing which affects the agent's will.

1) "Reasonableness in an action" is the common expression of the rationalists for the criterion by which to determine our moral judgments. In *Illustrations upon the Moral Sense* Hutcheson puts forward the following argument to show that the rationalists really provide no criterion at all. He observes that

Reasonableness in an action is a very common expression, but yet, upon inquiry, it will appear very confused, whether we suppose it the motive of election, or the quality determining approbation. . . . There is one sort of conformity to truth which neither determines to the one or the other; via., that conformity which is between every true proposition and its object. This sort of conformity can never make us choose or approve one action more than its contrary, for it is found in all actions alike: Whatever attributes can be found in a generous kind action, the contrary attributes may as truly be ascribed to a selfish cruel action: Both propositions are equally true, and the two contrary actions, the objects of the two truths are equally conformable to their several truths, with that sort of conformity which is between a truth and its object. This conformity then cannot make a difference among actions, or recommend one more than another to election or approbation, since any man may make as many truths about villany, as about heroism, by ascribing to it contrary attributes.30

Conformity to truth, the criterion of the rationalists, can mean little more than that the action is the object of a true proposition. But this being the case, all actions would have to be approved equally, since as many truths can be made about immoral actions as can be made about moral ones. The rationalists' criterion is unclear, Hutcheson points out, to the point, it seems, of being no criterion at all.

30Ibid., p. 404.
2) Hutcheson further criticizes the rationalists, and Clarke in particular, for using "fittingness", an essentially relative term, in a non-relational sense. An act may be fitting to certain ends, but morality does not depend on their fittingness, but rather upon the ends. The ultimate end would have to be such as not to be fitting for anything else, if it were not to be merely a means to an end. Here the point is reiterated, reason does discover whether means are good to the end chosen, but the ends are not justified in this manner, because they are not fitting to any further end. Reason does not determine whether we should approve or disapprove of ultimate ends, for this is the business of the moral sense.

Here it is plain, "A truth showing an action to be fit to attain an end", does not justify it; nor do we approve a subordinate end for any truth, which only shows it to be fit to promote the ultimate end; for the worst actions may be conducive to their ends, and reasonable in that sense. The justifying reasons must be about the ends themselves, especially the ultimate ends. The question then is, "Does conformity to any truth make us approve an ultimate end, previously to any moral sense?" For example, we approve pursuing the public good. For what reason? Or what is the truth or conformity to which we call it a reasonable end? I fancy we can find none in these cases, more than we could give for our liking any pleasant fruit. 31

Reason cannot approve ultimate ends. Not only can reason not justify ultimate ends, it cannot excite us to desire or seek any ends, for, as Hutcheson argues,

to subordinate ends those reasons or truths excite, which show them to be conducive to the ultimate end, and show one object to be more effectual than another; thus subordinate ends may be called reasonable. But as to the ultimate ends, to suppose exciting reason for them, would infer, that there is no ultimate end, but that we desire one thing for another in an infinite series. 32

31 Ibid., p. 408.
32 Ibid., pp. 405-6.
The rationalists fail to provide a criterion when they speak of the reasonableness of an action or its conformity to truth. When they explain such notions in terms of fittingness they only point out, Hutcheson contends, that it is not reason upon which morality depends, but moral sense. For reason cannot justify an ultimate end and cannot excite one to seek an ultimate end. And it is on this latter point that Hutcheson thinks the real inadequacy of rationalism is evident.

3) Hutcheson distinguishes between exciting and justifying reasons as follows:

But what is conformity of actions to reason? When we ask the reason of an action we sometimes mean "What shews a Quality in the action, exciting the agent to do it?" Thus, why does a luxurious man pursue wealth? The reason is given in the truth, "Wealth is useful to purchase pleasures." Sometimes for a reason of actions we shew the truth expressing a quality, engaging our approbation. Thus the reason of hazarding life in just war, is, that it tends to preserve our honest countrymen, or evidences public spirit... The former sort of reasons we call exciting, the latter justifying. Now we shall find that all exciting reasons presuppose instincts and affections; and the justifying presuppose a moral sense.

Hutcheson is arguing here that the apprehension of truths alone cannot excite one to action, i.e., reason by itself cannot provide a motive for action and one never has an obligation to perform an action unless he also has a motive to perform actions of that kind. "As to exciting reasons," Hutcheson writes, "in every calm rational action some end is desired or intended; no end can be intended or desired

33Ibid., p. 404.
previously to some one of these classes of affections, self-love, self-hatred. . . benevolence towards others, or malice. . . .

The sentimentalists hold that the rationalists are mistaken when they speak of reason and passion as being in conflict and in maintaining that no action is wise or good unless it is excited by reason, as distinct from all affection. They speak "as if indeed reason, or the knowledge of the relations of things, could excite to action when we proposed no end, or as if ends could be intended without desire or affection." And this was the oversight of the rationalists, as the sentimentalists saw it, for reason, in verifying the kind of propositions with which the rationalists were concerned, discovered nothing which would affect the agent's will. For judgments about the obligatoriness of acts must provide the agent with exciting reasons for doing them. For this is what it means for morality to be natural, i.e., that there is a natural disposition or determination of the will to do these types of actions. And this finally is the ultimate sanction for the sentimentalists. Since exciting reasons cannot be accounted for by reason alone, but presuppose that some end is desired, then we must conclude that the passions and reason are not in conflict and that reason should not be the master of the passions, but that it is the other way around. The place of reason in our moral judgments has taken a complete turn around. We can now say of the role of reason, that it is, to use Hume's expression, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions.

\[\text{34 Ibid.}\]
\[\text{35 Ibid., p. 405.}\]
This then is the setting of the controversy over the place of reason in moral judgments. And it is in light of these discussions and these two positions that Hume should be read. For it is only by keeping in mind the rationalists-sentimentalists controversy that we can understand Hume's arguments that "moral distinctions are not derived from reason." For I shall try to show that Hume, like Hutcheson, is criticizing the rationalists on three counts: (1) that they lack a criterion on which to make moral judgements since moral distinctions can be founded neither on matter of fact knowledge nor relations of ideas; (2) that reason serves only to determine means to ends, and that the ends are determined by sense; and (3) that reason can never excite one to action, and that exciting reasons presuppose instincts and desires. In light of these considerations we should be able to understand more clearly Hume's discussion of the problem of the place of reason in moral judgments.
CHAPTER III
REASON AND THE PASSIONS

Any attempt to understand Hume on the respective roles of reason and passion in moral decisions is immediately confronted with several different problems. In the first place one would expect to discover Hume's position in Book III of the Treatise. But after reading only three pages of Book III Hume points out that the conclusions presented here depend on his previous arguments in Book II, Part III, section 3. So one immediately begins to jump around in order to determine what Hume has really said with regard to the role of reason in morals. Further, there is the problem of determining what arguments Hume offers in support of his thesis that reason serves the passions, and these arguments are not always the same as the criticisms directed against the rationalists. It is one thing to refute one's predecessors, and another thing to establish one's thesis. These considerations do not always appear distinct in Hume. Then there is the vast quantity of material, and this poses no small problem in itself. All these problems have led to various interpretations of Hume, with varying degrees of emphasis being placed on different doctrines by different commentators. Whereas one commentator may stress the utilitarian aspects of Hume's morals, another may consider his doctrine of the moral sense paramount. These then are some of the initial problems one faces in studying Hume's ethics.
In this chapter I shall begin the examination of the role of reason in Hume's ethics with particular emphasis on Hume's contention that reason can never provide a motive for action, i.e., that reason, by itself, can never move men to action. In light of the above comments it should be obvious that this is no easy task. That I should avoid all the mistakes others have made is too much to hope for. But, that some previous mistakes by commentators can be pointed out is some progress in itself. At its best the following chapter will serve to show clearly the arguments Hume presents for his position, the assumptions underlying them, and the inadequacy of the arguments to prove that reason plays a subservient role to passions in moral decisions.

I intend to begin this inquiry into Hume's ethics in what would seem the most appropriate place. I shall start by considering the arguments presented in the section of Book III entitled, "Moral distinctions not derived from Reason." But as pointed out above, our stay with this section will be short lived, for the weight of its conclusions turn on the arguments presented in Book II.

After a brief statement concerning the importance men attach to ethical writings, and the belief that the answers concerning this subject lie within human comprehension, Hume makes a brief statement about perceptions in order to set the problem that is to be dealt with in this section of Book III. In all three Books of the Treatise, and at the beginning of the Enquiry, Hume commences by discussing the appropriate classification of the perceptions of the mind. In the Enquiry Hume says he is doing the geography of the mind, so it is important to know where the particulars with which we are dealing are
are located. Nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions, Hume tells us, and thus this term is applicable to moral perceptions as well as any. There are two kinds of perceptions, impressions and ideas. In Book I, "Of the Understanding", we dealt with ideas. In Book II, "Of the Passions", we dealt with impressions of reflections. The philosopher does not deal with impressions of sensation, for this falls as a task of the scientist. In Book III, then, we would expect to be told, in the first pages, whether we are dealing with impressions or ideas, for how can we carry out our mental geography if we are ignorant of our own location? But, Hume points out, it is not easy to say whether it is with impressions or with ideas that we are dealing, though this is surely the first thing that must be decided. The very distinction between impressions and ideas gives rise to the first problem in his inquiry concerning morals. For he must determine "whether tis by means of our ideas or impressions we distinguish betwixt vice and virtue, and pronounce an action blameable or praiseworthy?" (456) Not until we have done this can we begin a precise and exact study of moral subjects. Thus Hume begins Book III, as he began Book I and II, but the beginning itself sets the first problem. For we must determine whether it is by means of impressions or ideas that we distinguish vice from virtue. It is the answer Hume offers to this question that is of primary interest in this work.

Hume's method of procedure will be to examine this doctrine "that morality, like truth, is discerned merely by ideas, and by their juxta-position and comparison"(456-7). Such are the systems put for-
ward by the rationalists we examined in the preceding chapter. And
Hume points out,

In order therefore, to judge of these systems, we need only
consider whether it be possible, from reason alone, to dis­
tinguish between moral good and evil, or whether there must concur some other principles to enable us to make that dis­
tinction. (457)

Eliminate the possibility of moral distinctions being ascertained
by reason, and the only alternative is that they are impressions.
And this, we shall see, is substantially Hume's argument for the mor­
al sense theory. In section I he establishes that moral distinc­
tions are not derived from reason. Thus they must be impressions.
But not impressions of sensation, therefore internal impressions that
are the objects of another sense, the moral sense. But more on this
later.

Hume begins his critique of the possibility of moral distinc­
tions being ideas in a curious way. He points out that morality has
an influence on human actions. As evidence for this claim he points
out that if it didn't, then why do we take such pains to inculcate
it in men. Further, if it lacked this influence, the rules and precepts
of the moralists would be fruitless. Also, in defense of his claim
that morals influence actions, he points out that morality is usually
comprehended under practical philosophy, as opposed to speculative,
because "tis supposed to influence our passions and actions, and to
go beyond the calm and indolent judgments of the understanding." (457)
And then, as though it followed from the above, Hume draws a conclu­
sion. "Since morals, therefore, have an influence on the actions and
affections, it follows, that they cannot be derived from reason; and that because reason alone, as we have already proved, can never have any such influence." (45?) The curiosity is dissolved when we realize that the minor premise, necessary for drawing this conclusion, is written into the conclusion itself, and that it has already been proved true in Book II. The argument is, when properly stated,

1) Moral judgments, rules, and precepts excite passions and produce or prevent actions.

2) Reason, by itself, does not excite passions and produce or prevent actions.

3) Therefore, the rules of morality are not conclusions of our reason.

Hume points out that "no one. . . will deny the justness of this inference; nor is there any other means of evading it, than by denying that principle, on which it is founded."(45?) By "that principle" I take it that Hume means the second premise, that reason is inactive. But the argument is based on two premises, and Hume says nothing more in defense of the first premise, that morals move. I shall have occasion to discuss the first premise in the next chapter, but I might point out that I shall try to show that the first premise involves a collapse of Hutcheson's distinction between exciting and justifying reasons so as to involve only considerations of the former kind. More on this later. The next concern, because this is the way Hume proceeded, is with the defense of the second premise. Hume asks us to recollect what has been said on that subject and does not repeat all the considerations. We must now turn our attention to Book II,
Part III, section 3, in order to see if it is true that reason, by itself, is incapable of moving us to action.

Hume begins his section entitled "Of the influencing motives of the will" with a reference to the position of the rationalists. Their position, he reminds us, maintains the "supposed pre-eminence of reason above passion." (413) Most of moral philosophy, ancient and modern, had supposed this true. Even among common men one hears talk of the combat between reason and passion, and the preference is given to reason. But, Hume contends, all this moral philosophy rests on a mistake. "In order to show the fallacy of all this philosophy, 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." (413) The conclusion that follows from these two points, if Hume can establish them, is that moral distinctions are not derived from reason.

My analysis of this section, and the arguments Hume presents, will be divided into four parts. First, I shall consider his argument that reason can never be a motive to action. Secondly, I shall discuss his contention that reason can never oppose passion in the direction of the will, paying particular attention to his famous passage that "reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions". Thirdly, I shall consider his argument which maintains that since a passion is an original existence it cannot be said to be reasonable or unreasonable. And finally, I shall examine his discussion of the calm and violent passions.
1) We first have to consider Hume's arguments for the conclusion that reason alone can never be a motive for any action. Briefly stated, Hume's argument is as follows: the understanding exerts itself in two ways, as regards either relations of ideas or matters of fact. These two modes of reasoning cannot justify ends, for it is only from the prospects of pain and pleasure from any object that we feel an aversion or propensity towards it. Reason, in either form, can serve only to direct these impulses, and it is not by its means that the objects are able to affect us. Let us now consider this argument in detail.

The first consideration, and surely this is one of the most important considerations, has to do with Hume's definition of the term 'reason'. His particular considerations of the functions of reason stem from the arguments of Book I, where he pointed out the distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact. Now, with regard to relations of ideas it is hard to see how this knowledge, by itself, is ever the cause of action. Hume's point is that since this type of knowledge deals only with relations of ideas, it can never tell us anything about the realities involved in the world of action. Mathematics, for example, is useful knowledge and of immeasurable value in our everyday affairs, but mathematics, by itself, does not have any influence on our conduct. It has influence only when it is used to achieve some designed end or purpose, e.g., in paying a debt. Hume gives the example of the merchant who desires to know the sum total of his accounts. Why? What is the reason he desires to add up
his accounts? The reason has not to do with mathematical knowledge, but is explained in terms of his desire to pay his debts. Demonstrative reason did not cause him to add up his accounts. The endeavor to add up his accounts arose not from demonstrative reasoning itself, but from some desire. His knowledge came about because of a certain desire, but the knowledge did not, and never could, give rise to the desire.

Hume next considers empirical knowledge and what influence it can have on the will. "Tis obvious," Hume contends, "that when we have the prospects of pain or pleasure from any object, we feel a consequent emotion of aversion or propensity, and are carried to avoid or embrace what will give us this uneasiness or satisfaction." (414) But it is not reason that gives rise to this desire or aversion. It merely directs us in the pursuit of the object with regard to whether the object is attainable or not (whether it exist) and what means are appropriate to attain it. "But tis evident in this case, that the impulse arises not from reason, but is only directed by it." (414) Reason can direct our attention to an object and to the means of attaining it, but if we have no desire for the object, then reason, by itself, is incapable of moving us towards the object. "Where the objects themselves do not affect us, their connexion can never give them any influence; and tis plain, that as reason is nothing but the discovery of this connection, it cannot be by its means that the objects are able to affect us." (414)
One can better understand Hume's conception of reason as determining only means to an end by examining the section entitled "Concerning Moral Sentiment", which is the first appendix to the *Enquiry*. Here he is discussing the respective roles of reason and sentiment, and by an example he brings out the role of reason more clearly than he does in the *Treatise*. He has pointed out, in the *Enquiry*, that the principle foundation of moral praise is the usefulness of the quality or action. Now, reason alone can discover for us the usefulness of qualities or actions. But reason is not alone sufficient to produce any moral blame or approbation. Hume illustrates this point as follows.

Utility is only a tendency to a certain end; and were the end totally indifferent to us, we should feel the same indifference towards the means. It is requisite a sentiment should here display itself in order to give a preference to the useful above the pernicious tendencies. (E.286)

To say of something that it is useful does not mean that it is therefore an object to be desired. For if it is useful, it is useful as a means to something. The end, then, cannot be justified because it is useful, for then it would only be a means itself. The end is approved of, not because of its utility, but on separate grounds, and this, Hume concludes, shows that reason, which can only discover means to an end, can never justify the end itself.

Reason, then, instructs us in the several tendencies of the actions, but sentiment makes a distinction in favor of those which are useful and beneficial, pleasant and unpleasant. If I were asked why I like golf I might give as a reason for liking golf that it is good for my health. And, why do I want good health? I might reply, "because I like to feel
good?" "Why do you like to feel good?" "Why no reason can be given for this; I just like it." Or, to put it another way, "Why do I play golf?" Because it is enjoyable and affords a pleasant relaxation." And why do I like pleasure?" Well, surely, Hume would point out, reason can give no justification of this preference. Reason discovers the existence and the possibility of attaining an object, and discovers the means of attaining it, but sentiment moves us to action by its approval or disapproval of the end. I shall have an opportunity later to comment on this means-end interpretation of reason, but before doing this let me take up the second point.

2) The second point Hume wanted to prove, in order to show that there was no combat between reason and the passions, was that reason, besides being incapable of producing an action, is incapable of preventing an action or of disputing the preference of any passion or emotion. His argument is,

a) Nothing can oppose or retard the impulse of a passion, but a contrary impulse on the will.

b) Reason, by itself, is incapable of producing any impulse on the will.

c) Therefore, reason, by itself, cannot oppose or retard the impulse of any passion.

Hume says that we speak incorrectly when we say that reason is the principle that opposes passions in the direction of the will. Hume contends,

Thus it appears, that the principle, which opposes our passions, cannot be the same with reason, and is only called so in any improper sense. We speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and of reason. 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. (415)
Thus Hume claims to have proved his two points. It is now left to us to see if he is correct in his contentions.

The best way to begin the evaluation of Hume's arguments is by considering a problem involved in interpreting the above quoted passage. In his fine commentary, The Philosophy of David Hume, Norman Kemp Smith maintains "that what is central in Hume's philosophy is his contention that reason 'is and ought only to be' the servant of 'the passions'".1 As a key, to unlock the riddle of Hume's work, Smith puts forward the thesis "That it was through the gateway to morals that Hume entered into his philosophy, and that as a consequence of this, Books II and III of the Treatise are in date of first composition prior to the working out of the doctrines dealt with in Book I."2 Two things led Smith to this conclusion; (a) the recognition of Hutcheson's influence on Hume; and (b) a letter from Hume to his physician dated a few months prior to his settling in France for the completion of the Treatise.

Smith interprets the above passage, let us call it the "slave" passage, as though the "ought only to be" was a normative statement. The 'ought', on his interpretation, implies that nature, which is the basis of our passions, is normative. He then carried this interpretation to Book I, and assuming that beliefs were instances of passions, Smith maintained that Hume taught that reason ought to be the slave of what Smith called natural beliefs. Thus, Smith maintains about Hume,

2 Ibid., p. vi.
only causal beliefs ought (in a normative sense) to be relied upon.\(^3\)

As Smith puts it,

What is central in his (Hume's) teaching is . . . the doctrine that
the determining influence in human, as in other forms of animal
life, is feeling, not reason or understanding, i.e., not evidence
whether a priori or empirical, and therefore also not 'ideas'
as hitherto understood. 'Passion' is Hume's most general title
for instincts, propensities, feelings, emotions, and sentiments,
as well as for the passions ordinarily so called; and belief, he
teaches, is a passion. Accordingly the maxim which is central to
his ethics - 'Reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions' -
is no less central in his theory of knowledge, being there the
maxim: 'Reason is and ought to be subordinate to our natural beliefs.'\(^4\)

That Smith interprets this maxim in a normative sense is further evi-
denced by the omission of the 'only' in the above quote. And we shall
see this omission is of some importance as we proceed.

How does this normative interpretation of the "slave" passage
affect Smith's interpretation of Hume. Smith points out, and rightly
I believe, that Hume is not as skeptical as he is sometimes made out
to be. Hume defends the claim to knowledge against the skeptics by
maintaining that their criticisms are directed against those, like
Descartes, who would try to defend reason in terms of rational argu-
ments. When these arguments are destroyed by the sceptic doubt is
thrown upon the whole realm of human knowledge. But, Hume contends,
the attempt to justify reason, to show that thought and reality do
agree, was a misplaced effort to begin with. Reason is justified be-
cause we are driven to depend upon it. We should never try to defend

\(^3\) cf. Alfred B. Glathe, *Hume's Theory of the Passions and of

\(^4\) Smith, *Hume*, p. 11.
it by means of reason and to think it stands or falls with the rational arguments put forward in its defense. This ought not to be done. Thus Smith interprets Hume as saying we ought not to try to justify reason, for it is upon our passional nature, and not our rational arguments, that knowledge depends for its justification. Let me illustrate with some quotes from Smith.

In the field of matters of fact and existence, on the other hand, the term 'reason', if still held to, is a name for certain fundamental beliefs to which we are instinctively and irrevocably committed. Such reflective thinking as may be possible in this domain has to operate in subordination to, and in conformity with, them. In this field, as in the narrower field of morals, reason operates, as it ought to operate, only in the service of our instinctively determined propensities.\(^5\)

But we must return to Hume's central principle, that reason acts, as it ought, in the service of feeling and instinct.\(^6\) Only by misunderstanding and pretense can [reason] claim any other status. . . .

And finally,

The 'natural beliefs', in their character and function, correspond in the theoretical field to the passions and sentiments in the field of morals. To such beliefs reason, Hume teaches, ought to be subservient. . . . When Hume says 'ought', he means, of course, an 'ought' which he interprets in a sheerly naturalistic manner; it is a hypothetical, not a categorical 'ought'. The beliefs which ought to be accepted are, he teaches, are beliefs that nature itself marks out for us. In their fundamental forms as 'natural' beliefs, we have no choice but to accept them; they impose themselves upon the mind. And as regards the derivative beliefs to which our specific experiences give rise, these too (like the artificial virtues in the field of morals) are determined for us: Nature has endowed us with the reflective powers which, when rightly directed, commit us to them. For Hume, that is to say, logic and ethics rest on one and the same basis: experience, as extended in and through our reflective activities, is normative for both.\(^8\)

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5 Ibid., p. 68.
6 Ibid., p. 143.
7 Ibid., p. 200.
8 Ibid., p. 388.
Hume is the defender of nature against the assumed claims of reason.

Smith, then, takes the "slave" passage and working from an interpretation of it which holds that nature is normative, he finds the key to Hume's work. But is it true that in the "slave" passage Hume is holding that nature is normative? I think not. It can be shown, I believe, that the evidence Smith brings forward for his central thesis is mistaken and leads to a misinterpretation of the "slave" passage. The correct interpretation of Smith's external evidence and respective passage will show that Hume is imploring us, when we speak philosophically, not to misuse the word 'reason.' 'Reason' ought not be used in strict and philosophical discourse as if it were synonymous with the expression 'the principle which opposes our passions.' This will have to be shown by pointing out the sections of the text that support it. But I shall first take up the criticism of Smith's interpretation of the "slave" passage and his contention that it is the fundamental maxim of Hume's philosophy.

The weight of Smith's interpretation of Hume rests upon a letter Hume wrote to his physician just before leaving for France to finish the Treatise. There are two conclusions Smith draws from the letter. First, he maintains that a "new scene of thought" opened up to Hume and was the basis of his Treatise, and secondly, that it was through the study of morals that he acquired this new insight and thus he carried this over into the whole of his work. Smith considers this letter, along with the obvious Hutchesonian influence on Hume, as external evidence for his thesis about the key to Hume's work. I shall not quote the letter at length, but I shall have an opportunity to quote the crucial
passages later on. Let us now look at the external evidence in the letter.

Smith makes note of the fact that Hume three times mentions "a new scene of thought" or "foundation almost entirely new". Smith then asks, "Could these statements have been made, if his fundamental assumptions had been simply those of Locke and Berkeley." The answer must be "Who knows?" For from the letter quoted there is no explicit mention of what these new assumptions might be, and none that he made this discovery in his studies of morals. We cannot overlook the fact that there has been nothing advanced which even suggests, or renders probable, that Hume, influenced by Hutcheson, came to regard value judgments as based solely on feeling and that he carried this point of view over into the theoretical domain. Nor is Smith's interpretation obvious from the statements in the letter. And, if I read the letter correctly, the great discovery was that the experimental method of reasoning should be employed with regard to studies of human nature and moral inquiries. If my interpretation is correct, I shall have destroyed Smith's external evidence. For my interpretation tells us how to read Hume, that is, gives us the "key" Smith feels such a need to find, and further, it gives us an insight into the correct interpretation of the "slave" passage.

Smith proposes that "there is nothing to prevent, and everything to favor, our holding that it was in connection with the treatment of

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10 Ibid., p. 17.
the problems of morals that his new philosophy first began to formulate itself in his mind. . ." and he adds, in a footnote, "could we indeed have a more explicit assertion of this than Hume has himself given in the sentence beginning: 'This therefore, I resolved. . . .'"\(^{11}\)

But if one looks carefully, and without a previous conception, at the passage Smith refers to, I believe one will find something entirely different from Smith's interpretation. The passage reads,

> Having now time and leisure to cool my inflamed imagination, I began to consider seriously how I should proceed in my philosophical enquiries. I found that the moral philosophy transmitted to us by antiquity labored under the same inconvenience that has been found in their natural philosophy, of being entirely hypothetical, and depending more on invention and experience. Everyone consulted his fancy in erecting Schemes of Virtue and Happiness, without regarding human Nature, upon which every moral conclusion must depend. This therefore I resolved to make my principle study, and the source from which I should derive every truth in Criticism. . . as well as morality."\(^{12}\)

This passage, instead of pointing to Hume's interest in morality, and thus explaining that it was through morals that he achieved his new insight, can be better understood as pointing to Hume's new approach as "being an attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral Subjects."\(^{13}\)

First of all, what he tells us he is considering is "how I should proceed in my philosophical enquiries." We should look for the answer to this. And he does tell us how he is going to proceed. He is

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11 Ibid., p. 17.
12 Ibid., p. 16. (underlines mine)
13 From the title page of the Treatise.
going to avoid the mistake the philosophers of antiquity made. Their mis-
take was that of being "entirely hypothetical, and depending more upon
Invention than experience." Hume is going to go to experience as the
foundation of his investigation. And what is he going to examine
experimentally? The ancients had dreamed up their systems. They
really didn't even have a subject matter. They "consulted their fancy
without regarding Human Nature." Hume is going to examine human nature
experimentally. Further, the experimental examination of human nature
will avoid the problem the ancients had in moral philosophy as well
as in natural philosophy, of not depending on experience. The "moral"
here serves not to designate the study of morality, as Smith maintains,
but serves in the general sense to divide human knowledge into the two
areas: moral philosophy and natural philosophy. This is the same mean-
ing of 'morals' as is found in the title of the Treatise when Hume pro-
poses to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral
subjects. Smith is entirely wrong when he says,

Though it be true that the term 'moral' was used in the eighteen
century in a much wider sense than is now customary, and has been
so used by Hume himself, it seems clear in the letter above quoted
Hume using it mainly in its more specific sense, as referring to
morals ordinarily so called.

In light of my exposition of the letter it is now obvious that the sen-
tence Smith thought was the real clincher for his thesis was entirely
misread. And further, we can see that when Hume says "This therefore I
resolve to make my principle study, and the source from which I would
derive every truth in Criticism... as well as morality", the "This" does not refer to the study of morals as such, which Smith mistakenly maintains, but to "human Nature, upon which every moral conclusion must depend." This is almost too obvious to overlook.

The thesis that Hume came to Book I through Books II and III may or may not be correct. But it certainly does not have the external evidence Smith claims for it. The letter Smith relies on obviously means that Hume's new source of thought was the introduction of the experimental method into moral subjects. This is his new invention. He always claimed so. Consider Hume's own introduction to the Treatise. How is he going to "proceed in [his] philosophical investigations?"

He will proceed, he tells us,

to march directly to the capital or center of these sciences, to human nature itself; which being once masters of, we may every where else hope for an easy victory. From this station we may extend our conquests over all those sciences, which more intimately concern human life... In pretending therefore to explain the principles of human nature, we in effect propose a complete system of the sciences, built upon a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand securely.

And as the science of man is the only solid foundation we can give for the other sciences, so the only solid foundation we can give to this science itself must be laid on experience and observation. (XX, underlines mine)

Two points follow from the above interpretation of Hume's letter. First, Smith has no external evidence for his thesis. Nor does the internal evidence he puts forward help his cause, for I have shown that Hume, in the letter, is expressing precisely the same thing he expresses in the introduction to the Treatise. He is going to introduce the experimental method into the examination of human nature.
This is his proposal, this he reiterates over and over again, and this is all the "key" needed to read Hume. Secondly, the normative interpretation of the "slave" passage must be correct or incorrect in so far as it accords with what Hume has said in the text. Possibly Smith misinterprets the "slave" passage because he could have no "key" to interpret it. But none is needed. We need only examine the text itself. And I propose to show that if we keep in mind that Hume thinks he is experimentally examining human nature, and if we stick to the text itself, we shall see that the normative interpretation is incorrect, with regard to the "slave" passage, and that what Hume is doing is offering us the precise or philosophical use of the term 'reason'.

The "slave" passage come as the conclusion of the reasoning that establishes the two points concerning the impotency of reason. Hume has argued that whenever we speak of being moved to action we cannot say it is reason that does this. The only things that can move the will are passions and desires, and to speak of reason as the faculty that controls our passions is to speak incorrectly. Hume has tried to show in his arguments that, as a matter of fact, reason is the slave of the passions. "Thus it appears, that the principle, which opposes our passion, cannot be the same with reason, and is only called so in
an improper sense." (415 underlines mine) And he further adds, "We speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and reason." (415 underlines mine) Hume is discussing here the correct use of the term 'reason'. In the "slave" passage, when Hume says "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, . . ." the "ought only to be" refers to the use of the term 'reason', and the 'ought' should not be construed as telling us what ought to be the proper role of reason. Hume is telling us how to use the term 'reason' in discourse that claims to be strict and philosophical. Book III of the Treatise further corroborates this contention that Hume is offering a definition of the term 'reason'. He says that to speak of reason as causing an action is "an abusive way of speaking, which philosophy will scarcely allow of. . . ." (459) and further, "It has been observed, that reason, in a strict and philosophical sense, can have an influence on conduct only after two ways . . . ." (459) It is also significant that in Book III Hume does not repeat the arguments in the first two parts of this section, for he supposes we will recall the correct use of the term 'reason.' And finally, in the last part of this section on the "influencing motives of the will" he tries to account for the misuse of 'reason' in terms of the misapplication of it to the calm passions. This analysis deals a blow to the contention that the "ought" implies that nature is normative, as Smith had argued. For the "ought" deals with the correct use of the word 'reason' in precise discourse.

This lengthy discussion concerning Smith's interpretation of the respective roles of reason and passion in Hume's Treatise was
necessary in order to clear away the conception that reason ought to stay in its place rather than try to venture into a domain it is ill equipped for. Reason, strictly speaking, cannot venture into the domain of moral choice as the principle that opposes passions. 'Reason' is defined by Hume precisely as that principle which is the slave of the passions; serving only to direct the passions by distinguishing means to ends and the existence of objects desired; and is incapable of giving rise to any impulse that might be contrary to a passion. The first half of the section "of the influencing motives of the will" gives us a definition of 'reason', and, as one might expect, the latter half of the section gives us a definition of the term 'passion'. But our concern, for the present, is with Hume's definition of 'reason'.

It would be a mistake to jump to the conclusion, as Laird does, that Hume begged the question. Laird contends that "he defined 'reason' as 'a conclusion only of our intellectual faculties', i.e., as not practical, although the rationalist held that there was a practical as well as an intellectual employment of 'reason'". Laird further contends that reason does affect conduct and Hume's statement that only the prospect of pleasure or pain moved us was mere counter-assertion. Laird's criticism does not destroy Hume's definition. Certainly Hume has given a definition, but there is nothing in itself wrong with a definition. The rationalists certainly did claim that reason was practical, but could they prove it? Hume does not just offer a counter-

claim to their thesis, he offers an analysis of reason, hoping to show that reason isn't practical. Any criticism directed against Hume must be directed against this analysis, for it is certainly not enough to claim he has offered a definition and suppose this in itself is illegitimate. Can the rationalists, considered in the preceding chapter, meet Hume's criticism? In light of their own statements I think it is clear that they cannot. They have merely claimed reason can influence actions and combats passions. Well then, is Hume correct in his contention that "reason is and ought only to be, the slave of the passions?" And again I think not. In order to show the inadequacy of Hume's definition of 'reason', and thus subvert his whole thesis, I must show that Hume has an incorrect conception of reason, and unduly limits its influence. And in order to do this I must establish two points: (a) that reason is not limited to the means-end conception Hume puts forward; and (b) that it is not the case that pleasure and pain are ends that go beyond the limits of rational justification.

a) The first point to be established in this criticism of Hume's analysis is that the means-end conception of reason is unduly narrow. Then I shall be able to show that an end is not something that can't be accounted for by reason and that an end is not the same as what we desire.

As we have seen, Hume's conception of reason is "that reason, in a 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 connection of causes and effects so as to afford us a means of exerting any passion." (459) Reason's task is to find the appropriate means to our ends, but there finally comes a place where we deal with the end itself, and it would not be an end if reason could justify it. Therefore, reason can't justify ultimate ends and these are chosen because of the prospect of pleasure or pain that the object would afford us. The end is desirable on its own account and cannot be justified by reason. An excellent example of this conception of means-end reasoning is given in the Enquiry.

It appears evident that the ultimate ends of human actions can never, in any case, be accounted for by reason, but recommend themselves entirely to the sentiments and affections of mankind, without any dependence on the intellectual faculties. Ask a man why he uses exercise; he will answer, because he desires to keep his health. If you then enquire, why he desires health, he will readily reply, because sickness is painful. If you push your enquiries farther, and desire a reason why he hates pain, it is impossible he can ever give any. This is an ultimate end, and is never referred to any other object.

Perhaps to your second question, why he desires health, he may also reply, that it is necessary for the exercise of his calling. If you ask, why he is anxious on that head, he will answer, because he desires to get money. If you demand why? It is the instrument of pleasure, says he. And beyond this it is an absurdity to ask for a reason. It is impossible there can be a progress in infinitum; and that one thing can always be a reason why another is desired. Something must be desirable on its own account, and because of its immediate accord or agreement with human sentiment and affection. (E. 293)

But is it true our ends are something that we can't give reasons for, that can't be justified by reasons? Is it correct to say they are the things we desire?

What are ends, and what do we mean by "means to an end"? Kurt
Baier points out several characteristics of ends. They are things we can gain or fail to gain, and something that cannot possibly be gained is not an end. This distinguishes ends from ideals. For example, "always bring about the greatest happiness for the greatest number" is an ideal and differs from an end in that it is unattainable. Further, ends are necessarily someone's. The gaining of an end is a clockable matter for we can say when we have brought about the desired event or when we have prevented an event. Ends are short range goals capable of explaining one's actions, e.g. "with this end in view I did...."

And finally, and here is where the disagreement with Hume lies, our ends are not (necessarily) the same as what we desire or want.16

When I say I desire something I mean that I have an impulse to secure the object of the desire. Desire involves a felt impulse towards doing something. For Hume, 'desire' is used to cover a whole range of tendencies and dispositions that do not properly fall under the term. For Hume an end is something we desire, something we have an impulse towards, and "the impulse arises not from reason, but is only directed by it." (414) According to Hume, to say that an object is an end is to say that "we have the prospect of pain or pleasure from [the] object, [and] we feel a consequent emotion of aversion or propensity, and are carried to avoid or embrace what will give us this uneasiness or satisfaction." (414) 'Desire' covers a whole range of tendencies that cannot properly be called desires, and only because he fails to see the differ-

16 Ibid., pp. 262-3.
ences in these does Hume say an object is only an end if it is an ob-
ject of desire. Let us consider this.

As pointed out, when I desire something I have an impulse towards
doing that something, e.g., eating. But to say that I enjoy something
does not mean I have an impulse towards this thing. I enjoy golf,
but feel no impulse to play golf. Now, that I enjoy this or desire
that are facts about me, and the fact that I enjoy doing something is
a reason for doing it, just as the fact that I desire something is a
reason for doing it. Thus, the fact that I desire something is a
reason for entering upon a line of action designed to fulfill it.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 111.}

That I enjoy this and desire that are facts about me. But these
must be distinguished from liking something, which is not a fact
about me, but depends upon reasons. I think that the word 'like' has
several uses, one of which is synonymous with 'enjoy', but I am dis-
cussing the kind of liking that one might better refer to with the
word 'prefer'. My preferences depend on reasons. We can ask "Why?"
with regard to a preference or liking, but not so with regard to some-
thing I enjoy. "Why do you like to pay your debts?" I might reply,
"In order to have good credit." We supply reasons that justify these
preferences. But it is not the same when someone asks, "Why do you
enjoy golf?" Here he is not asking for a reason that would justify
my enjoyment, though he might be asking for an explanation of the
particular features I enjoy. I might reply, "I enjoy the challenge
of trying to hit the ball," and if he were to ask "Why?" I would probably reply, "For no particular reason, I just enjoy that sort of thing." This is to give a reason for doing that sort of activity. And the reason explains why I enjoy that sort of activity.

Another difference between enjoying and liking is that though it is true that if I enjoy something I have a reason for liking it, it does not follow that if I like or prefer something that I then enjoy it. Enjoying and preferring are independent of each other in this respect. For there are plenty of things that I do not enjoy doing which I nevertheless prefer to do for some reason or other. And when I say that I prefer to do this more than that, whether what I do is right or not depends upon whether I have good or bad reasons for preferring to do it. Thus, there is a very important sense in which I can say that I am doing something I don't enjoy or want to do, but that there are good reasons for me doing it. These reasons differ from the explanatory reasons given for enjoying something. They do more than explain my preferences, they justify them.

A word about "means" before we go on. There is one sense of means that we use when we say that a check is the easiest means for paying bills. But there is another sense, and this is brought to light in the expression "means to an end." For here we usually mean "mere means" and that the end justifies the means.18

I would now put forward three considerations that support my contention that Hume misdefined 'reason' and was confused in his

18Ibid., p. 263.
analysis of the role reason plays in justifying our moral choices. (1) It is true that we often explain someone's behavior by pointing to the end towards which his actions are directed. But it does not follow from this that reason cannot account for ends, or only functions to justify actions pointing towards ends. When Hume says that the ends are determined by desires he is, for the most part, wrong. For we definitely do do things which we do not desire to do, nor enjoy doing, but which we prefer to do because we believe the weight of reason lies behind our decision. It is true that no justification can be given for our desires, but we do ask for a justification of preferences, which are different from desires.

2) If we consider the sole type of explanation as the means-end type, then much of human behavior must remain unexplained. For the man who does something as an end in itself has no reason for what he does. And this is obviously false. For a man may play golf because he enjoys it, and that he enjoys it is as much a reason for doing it as is necessary.

3) Finally, we can see that means-ends explanations are only provisional and incomplete. To use Baier's example, he went to the cellar to fetch the kerosene. He then poured some into a jug in order to be able to soak his hand in it. He then struck a match in order to set his hand alight.19 Here is a perfect example of means-end reasons. His end was to set his hand on fire. But this is not a satisfactory explanation and we want to ask, "Why did he want to set his hand on

19Ibid., p. 265
fire?" Let us suppose that the reason the man set his hand on fire was because he had guilt feelings about things he had done with that hand and thus wanted to destroy it. Surely that explains why he did what he did. But we are not asking for that type of reason. That is the reason for his action, but that only explains why he did what he did. What we want is a reason that justifies what he did. "We want to know", as Baier put it, "not what moved the man, but whether what he did was in accordance with or contrary to reason." We want to know if what he did can be justified from a rational point of view.

B) But this does not completely dispose of this issue. For, Hume would say, with regard to the reasons you speak so loosely of in the above, these are just reasons for ulterior ends. There are no reasons for ultimate ends. "If you push your enquiries farther," Hume asserts, "and desire a reason why he hates pain, it is impossible he can ever give any. This is an ultimate end, and is never referred to any other object." And further, Hume asserts: "If you demand Why? It is the instrument of pleasure, says he. And beyond this it is an absurdity to ask for a reason. It is impossible there can be a progress in infinitum and that one thing can always be a reason why another is desired." (E. 293) In other words, we can give no reason for the love of pleasure and the hatred of pain and it is evident that "Tis from the prospect of pain or pleasure that the aversion or propensity arises.

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20 Ibid., p. 265.
towards any object." (414) Our ends are determined by our desires, and we all desire pleasure and desire to avoid pain. No reason can be given to justify or explain this love of pleasure or hatred of pain. These are ultimate ends.

Let us examine the role of pleasure in Hume's works and see how it functions and whether it is really the ultimate end by which we justify other actions, but which cannot itself be justified. Hume's statements about pleasure and pain are so many in number and so various in meaning, that it is hard to say precisely what he regarded as the role of pleasure and pain in morals. It is Norman Kemp Smith's contention that Hume's teaching is non-hedonistic. Smith maintains that "Pleasure and pain, for Hume as for Hutcheson, are merely the efficient causes, not the objects or ends of actions."21 But such an interpretation is inconsistent with what Hume says in the Enquiry in the passage quoted above and in his concluding paragraph in the appendix, on the "Moral Sentiment." He says here,

Reason, being cool and disengaged, is no motive to action, and directs only the impulses received from appetite or inclinations, by showing us the means of attaining happiness or avoiding misery: Taste, as it gives pleasure or pain, and thereby constitutes happiness or misery, becomes a motive to action, and is the first spring or impulse to desire and volition. (E. 294)

This seems to express a theory of desire which has as the object of desire pleasure or avoidance of pain. It is not our own pleasure we always desire, for by sympathy or benevolence we experience the pleasures others have, or might have, and thus will try to produce pleasures

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from them, without any concern for reward for ourselves. "The very essence of virtue... is to produce pleasure, and that of vice to give pain." (296) Smith is correct that pleasure is the efficient cause of the indirect passions, and not the object of these passions. But the role of pleasure is important, for it is only by its means that the passions arise. Pride is the result of an idea caused by the sensation of pleasure which is the quality of an object related to the self. It would seem that Hume's statements in Book II are somewhat inconsistent with those of Book III.

I am not sure one can resolve this inconsistency in Hume with regard to the role of pleasure and pain, but it seems obvious, from the sections I have quoted, that pleasure and pain are the objects of desire in his ethics. Possibly Smith stresses too much Hume's analysis of Pride and Humility. With regard to these passions pleasure is not the final cause, but is the efficient cause. But with regard to the indirect passions of Love and Hatred I am not so sure they can be characterized exactly as Pride and Humility. For when we love an object, according to Hume, we seek to possess it. It is loved because of its pleasant sensation or hated because it gives rise to painful ones. Now here the object is desired or avoided because of the pleasant or painful sensations it gives rise to. With regard to pride, however, it would make no sense to say we desire an object, that is, seek to possess it, because it makes us proud. For if the object was not already related to us, according to Hume, the passion of pride could not arise. We might seek an object because it will make us proud,
but then we seek it, I suppose Hume would say, because the passion of pride is pleasant. Therefore, even Hume's discussions of the Passions can be interpreted as a theory of desire. And the object is desired because it gives rise to pleasant sensations. To distinguish between pleasure as the efficient cause, as opposed to the final cause, does not really clarify the issue or enlighten us on the role of pleasures in Hume's discussion of the passions and morals. I think Hume does treat morals mainly as a theory of desire, though he does make clear that our desires are not all self-interested. There are disinterested desires. But it can properly be said, that the final object of all our desires is pleasure, or the avoidance of pain.

Pleasure is a sensation, i.e., an impression of the senses as opposed to an impression of reflection. It is not a passion. Of the three kinds of "impressions conveyed by the sense. . . the third are the pains and pleasures, that arise from the application of objects to our bodies, as by the cutting of our flesh with steel, and such like." (192) There are, of course, other types of pleasures than the bodily type.

Tis evident, that under the term pleasure, we comprehend sensations, which are very different from each other, and which have only such a distant resemblance, as is requisite to make them be expressed by the same abstract term. A good composition of music and a good bottle of wine equally produce pleasure, and what is more, their goodness is determined merely by the pleasure. But shall we say upon that account, that the wine is harmonious, or the music of good flavor? (472)

The important thing to note in these passages is that pleasure and pain are sensations produced by certain objects, activities, under-goings, etc. And it is different pleasant sensations that we desire.
"The mind by an original instinct tends to unite itself with the good and avoid the evil. . ."." (438)

Hume contends that pleasure and pain are the ultimate ends and that one cannot ask for a reason why one loves pleasure or why one hates pain. This is to attempt to take reason beyond its proper function, for these are not means to any other end. I would like to show that Hume is incorrect on this point, and that pleasure and pain are the ultimate ends, and, in fact, are not ends at all. As pointed out above, Hume construes both pleasures and pains as sensations. Pleasures are sensations we like to have, pains are sensations we dislike having. But pleasures, unlike pains, are not sensations. Most of the questions we can ask about pains, sensations, and feelings, cannot be asked about our likings, dislikings, enjoyings, and detestings. When someone steps on my toe there is a painful sensation. But when I enjoy a game of golf, there are not two things, the golf and a pleasant sensation. The pain in my toe can be clocked. But the pleasure of the game cannot be clocked. We can clock the game, but there is no counterpart, a sensation, that can be clocked. When the doctor asks where it hurts I point to my toe. But I would indeed think it a peculiar question to ask were the game felt good. I should have to reply, "on the links." There is not something else in progress, additional to the game, which I like. Pleasure, is not a sensation at all.

Remarks like "I hate pain" and "I love pleasure" are empty, uninformative, and tautologous. They sound like "I hate tickles and

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heartburn," but they are totally different. It is only when pains and pleasures are construed as sensations and as having another property, being liked or disliked, that it makes sense to say "I like pleasure" and "I hate pain" and to assume that these statements give information about our predilections. 'Pleasure' and 'pain' are not the names of certain sensations of a special sort, but these words are used to indicate how we respond to certain things.

Let us consider pain. There are certain sensations we immediately say are painful. They produce in us certain responses, winces, jerks, screams, which are characteristic of pain. When I say "Don't stomp my toe" the reason I give is that it is painful. This expresses my dislike of having my toe stomped. But if I were asked why I disliked the pain, I should not reply, as Hume would, that no reason can be given for disliking pain, we just do, as a matter of fact dislike pain. Surely no reason can be given for disliking pain, but this is not because reason is limited, but because that is what it means to be painful— to be disliked. It is a necessary proposition that "I dislike having the sensations that are painful." In the assertion "Don't stomp my toe because it will hurt," the end is the prevention of a toe stomping. The reason that justifies the end is that it will hurt. This is a fact about toe stomping. I don't have to justify disliking what hurts, because what I mean by it hurting is that it is something I dislike. The avoidance of pain is not an end. We do seek to avoid things that

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23Baier, Moral Point of View, p. 268.
are painful. We seek to avoid them because they are painful. The end is to avoid the object, act, event, etc., and the reason we seek to avoid them is because they are painful. The avoidance of pain is not the end, but is the reason we seek to avoid certain objects. And it makes no sense to ask why we dislike pain, because that is what it means to be painful.

Further, "always avoid pain" is not an end for another reason. It is a principle, and principles are not ends. Principles are guides, they direct us to ends, and they are adhered to or broken. Ends are gained or failed to be gained, and if they are gained, then they are discarded for new ends. A principle is not done with when we have gained it, or acted according to it. "Always avoid pain" can be a principle, but not an end.

Let us now consider pleasures. Pleasures, as pointed out above, are not sensations that stand at the opposite end of the scale of pains. Sensations, like those involved in pain, are not necessarily involved in the things we find pleasant. In the case of things we find pleasant there is always the possibility of asking "why do you find it pleasant?" Why do I find golf pleasant? Because it relaxes me, gives me exercise, makes me sleep better, etc. But there is no question, as we have seen, of why I find something painful, because it is a sensation I find painful. If one asks why you dislike headaches, the answer is "because they hurt." The answer to this question with regard to pain involves reference to a sensation, while the answer with regard to pleasure does not. To say I find an activity
pleasant is to say "I desire or want to do it," or "I enjoy it," or
"I prefer it." I express my likes and dislikes. Thus, when I say "I
like golf" the question can be asked "Why do you like it?" I can point
out that I enjoy that sort of thing. If someone asks why I enjoy it,
I might point out, as above, the qualities that I enjoy about the game.
But if someone were to ask me why I enjoy the things I enjoy, which is
equivalent to Hume's "why do you like pleasure", I should think it
a peculiar question. It is not peculiar because he is asking me to
justify an ultimate end, and thus he must think reason can progress
in infinitum. It is peculiar because it is a tautology to reply "I
enjoy what I enjoy." That I enjoy the game is a fact about my prefer-
ences and is a reason that justifies the pursuit of the end, namely,
golf. And the end is justified in so far as the reasons given are or
are not good ones. Pleasure and pain are not ultimate ends, they are
not ends at all.

By way of summary, my criticism against Hume's contention that
"reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions" has been
this. Hume has a mistaken conception of reason as limited only to the
means-end function. The end could not be rationally justified, but
must be an object of desire. 'Desire' is a term used by Hume to cover
a whole range of different concepts. To desire something is to have
an impulse towards it and the desire is a reason for pursuing the ob-
ject. It is a fact about myself that I desire something. To enjoy
something is also a fact about the things I prefer. I can be asked
why I enjoy the things that I do enjoy. The answer to such a question
is an enumeration of the qualities that explain why I enjoy it. But when I prefer or like something I can be asked not only to explain what qualities I like or prefer, but also I can be asked to justify the preference, i.e., give good reasons for choosing what I do. There is not, as Hume thought, a final end that must serve to justify these preferences. Pleasure and pain are not ends, hence not ultimate ends. We are not at a loss when asked why we like pleasure and hate pain, because that is what we mean by pleasure and pain. Therefore, when I say I exercise as a means to health, and I want health to avoid sickness, the end is the avoidance of sickness, the justification for seeking the end is the fact that it is painful to be sick. It is a mistake to say, as Hume does, that you want to avoid sickness as a means to avoid pain. And why do you want to avoid pain? Because you dislike it. And why do you dislike pain? No reason can be given! But then of course no reason can be given. But the reason no reason can be given is that that is what I mean by pain -- sensations I dislike. It is because of these sensations that I seek to remain healthy. And that is the justification of my seeking health, which justifies all the energy spent exercising.

3) The distance traveled thus far has been great. And I should remind the reader where we are. I previously dealt with the first two arguments, or sections, of Hume's discussion "of the influencing motives of the will." There are still two more sections, but I assure you the road won't be as rough to travel. In these last two sections Hume is trying to illustrate his thesis that reason can never move us to action
and to draw the important conclusion that passions and actions are
neither reasonable nor unreasonable and therefore it is a mistake to
suppose a combat between reason and passion. It is towards this dis-
cussion that we must now turn our attention.

In the first two sections we dealt with the correct use of the
term 'reason' and the analysis that justified the restricted use of the
term. In these last two sections we are dealing with the passions.
Hume begins by defining a passion. In light of his considerations
concerning reason, he concludes that it makes no sense to speak of a
passion being reasonable or unreasonable, though a judgment that might
accompany the passion could be so considered. I shall consider the
argument for this conclusion in greater detail in the next chapter,
because this argument is repeated by Hume in Book III. But I shall
here put forward his discussion of the passions because it is necessary
in order to understand the argument in Book III.

Hume defines a passion as "an original existence, or, if you
will, modification of existence, and contains not any representative
quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence or modification."
(415) This definition is intelligible only in light of Hume's classi-
fication of perceptions. All perceptions of the mind may be divided
into impressions and ideas. Impressions are of two sorts; original,
impressions of sensation, and secondary, impressions of reflection.
Original impressions arise in the soul without any antecedent precep-
tion. Ideas are derived from these impressions and are copies of them.
Ideas are true or false in so far as they represent or fail to repre-
sent impressions. "Secondary, or reflective impressions are such as proceed from some of these original ones, either immediately or by the interposition of its idea." (275) The passions and other emotions are these secondary kind of impressions.

The important part of this classification is that passions are placed in the category of impressions, which are, by definition, non-representational. The only preceptions that represent are ideas, and only these can be said to be true or false, contrary to, or in conformity with, reason. Passions, though derived from ideas or original impressions are not representations of that which is their source. This is what Hume means when he says they are original existences. They don't refer to any other thing. Since only ideas represent, and thus only they are true or false, and since passions are not ideas, Hume concludes,

*Tis impossible, therefore, that this passion can be opposed by, or be contradictory to truth and reason; since this contradiction consists in the disagreement of ideas, considered as copies, with those object, which they represent. (415)

The only sense it makes to talk about a passion being unreasonable is to say, strictly speaking, that the judgment which accompanies it is unreasonable. And this judgment can be unreasonable only in two ways: when it supposes the existence of an object that does not exist, and when it chooses means insufficient for the desired end. Thus Hume can conclude what he originally set out to prove: "Tis impossible, that reason and passion can ever oppose each other, or dispute for the government of the will and actions." (416) Though I shall consider this argument in greater detail in the next chapter, I did want to introduce it here and consider it in this section because it is the argument
that proves, in Hume's opinion, that reason and passion do not conflict. This argument depends, of course, on the conclusions of the first two parts of this section. And I have tried to show that Hume is not justified in claiming to have shown that reason can never move us to action and that it plays only a limited role in moral decisions.

4) Hume rests his case. He believes he has shown that it is absurd to suppose that there is a dispute between reason and passion. There is no combat between reason and the passions, and thus no reason to give a preference to reason over the passions as the rationalist did. But how could so many philosophers have been mistaken? The answer, of course, is that they consulted their fancy rather than experience. But what is even more dreadful is that the common man has made the same mistake. How can this be? And the answer to this question is the concern of the final part of Hume's discussion "of the influencing motives of the will." The reason for this mistaken way of speaking is that men have confused what are really calm passions with the motions of reason. "Reason. . . exerts itself without producing any sensible emotion. . . and scarce ever conveys any pleasure and uneasiness." (417) And human nature is such "that every action of the mind, which operates with the same calmness and tranquility, is confounded with reasons." (417) This, of course, follows from Hume's all important principle, used throughout his discussions of the existence of the external world and personal identity, that where things are greatly alike, they are taken as the same by the human mind. Thus, the calm passions, such as benevolence and resentment or the general appetite to good and aversion to evil, cause no disorder in the soul and are very readily taken for determinations of reason. "What we call strength of mind,
implies the prevalence of the calm passions above the violent. . .\" (418)

Hume's contention that rationality and calmness are often confused should leave one unconvinced. Could such an error really give rise to such a widespread belief? What does he mean by the calmness of reason? Isn't reason, on some occasions, and by his own analysis in Book I, something other than calm? Does he mean, by reason exerting itself without any sensible emotion, that what we believe true or false is such that we can, at will, believe something else? Belief, on Hume's own analysis, is the enlivening of an idea so as to make it as forceful as an impression. Beliefs are forceful, and they are true or false. Hume, if anybody ever did, exploited the psychological fact that beliefs are not subject to the will, that I don't just decide to believe this or that, but that I am forced into beliefs when I hold something to be true, and that, as a matter of fact, some people are pretty violent about the things they believe. Further, when Hume defines relations of ideas, as a type of knowledge, as involving "every affirmation which is intuitively or demonstratively certain" he means, among other things, that these ideas are true because we can't help but believe them true. We can't even conceive their opposites. How is this possible if reason is so calm? It is true that many of our basic beliefs are not rationally justified, as Hume so ably pointed out, but he does not throw out these beliefs. He founds them on certain basic beliefs, and he maintains that we are forced to assent to their truth, i.e., we cannot but believe them true. Is this the calm influence of reason? There is a force to reason such that we
can't change our beliefs at will. If reason lacked this force then it wouldn't even be able to perform the functions Hume assigns to it. In light of Hume's own analysis of reason, I can't understand what he means when he claims, in this section, that reason is so calm and is often confused with the calm passions. Surely this is no more than an ad hoc explanation.

This chapter has been devoted to the arguments Hume put forward in defense of his thesis that reason, by itself, does not excite passions and produce or prevent actions. It has dealt with the second premise of Hume's argument which gives rise to the conclusion that the rules of morality are not conclusions of reason. I have considered Hume's arguments, and some of the varying interpretations of his meaning, and I have concluded that the arguments he brings forward to support this premise are not sound arguments. Having done this, I can now proceed to the next two tasks before us. I previously raised a question about the first premise of Hume's argument: "Moral judgments, rules, and precepts excite passions and produce or prevent actions." In the next chapter I wish to analyze this premise and show how it embodies the collapse of the important distinction between exciting reasons and justifying reasons, and how this leads Hume to the paradoxical conclusions he draws concerning the subservience of reason to the passions. In the following two chapters I shall then finish my discussion of section I, part I of Book III, paying particular attention to the arguments Hume directs against the rationalists.
It is with Hume's arguments for the claim that "the rules of morality are not conclusions of our reason" that this chapter deals. We have already considered the support Hume offers for the contention that "reason, by itself, does not excite passions and produce or prevent actions." I tried to show that Hume failed to establish this point. In this chapter we will be concerned with the first premise of Hume's argument, namely, "moral judgments, rules, and precepts excite passions and produce or prevent actions." It is only when this premise is understood that we come to understand how it is that Hume was led to hold the position that we cannot distinguish right from wrong or good from bad by means of reason.

Any effort to understand Hume's position on this matter is impeded, I believe, by Hume's use of the word 'morality.' He says, "Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions," or "If morality had no influence on human passions and actions, twere in vain to take such pains to inculcate it," and further, "As long as it is allowed that reason has no influence on our passions and actions, tis in vain to pretend, that morality is discovered only by a deduction of reason." (457, underlines mine) How does Hume use the term 'morality'? The very vagueness of the term constitutes an initial problem in understanding Hume's first premise, which asserts that morals move.
The problem is something like this. When we use the term 'moral' we usually use it to modify such terms as 'beliefs', 'convictions', 'judgments', 'assertions', 'principles', etc. Thus we would say "moral beliefs move one to action", or "moral judgments move one to action". As Stevenson put it, "doubtless there is always some element of description in ethical judgments, but this is by no means all. Their major use is not to indicate facts, but to create an influence."¹ We would indeed think it odd if Stevenson had just said "moral beliefs create an influence". Moral what? What is this that creates an influence on our actions?

Let us suppose that moral judgments or beliefs are what move us to action. But then a serious problem arises. For it is precisely the case, by Hume's own account, that judgments, beliefs, etc., are true or false, dealing with ideas, and representing impressions. And yet, the whole point of this argument in section I is to prove that "morals" are not derived from reason, do not deal with ideas, are not true or false, compatible or incompatible. It seems the very attempt to talk about moral distinctions commits one to talking about moral judgments, which Hume would consider as ideas and not impressions, and thus making it impossible for Hume to say that moral distinctions are discerned by impressions and not ideas.

In order to be able to speak more intelligently, and to avoid the use of the vague term 'morals', I would propose the following interpretation of Hume's usage of the word. Moral distinctions are not discerned by reason alone. By means of a moral sense, or an original sense of morality, we experience, of feel, whether an action is morally good or evil. Here only an impression is involved. It is by means of an impression that actions or qualities of character are discerned as either virtuous or vicious. When we judge that the action is good or bad, vicious or virtuous, we are deriving our judgment from an impression. And this is the case with judgments or ideas; they copy impressions and are true or false in so far as they agree or disagree to some real existence or matter of fact. Moral judgments, beliefs, etc., are derived from impressions. The former are true or false, the latter or not. And it is by means of the impressions that we distinguish good from evil and vice from virtue.

When Hume says "morals move us to action" he means that an impression or feeling of the moral character of an object or act causes us to approve or disapprove this character and thus gives us a propensity towards or aversion to the object or character considered. Reason, by itself, is impotent in this respect, Hume hopes to prove, and only by means of an impression could we be moved in such a fashion.

One word of caution before we go on. It would be a mistake, if the above is correct, to construe Hume as an emotivist. Moral judgments, strictly speaking, are true or false. One might be led to an emotivist interpretation of Hume because of his insistence that passions,
volitions and actions cannot "be pronounced either true or false, and be either contrary to or conformable to reason." (458)

The premise that concerns us in this chapter, that "moral judgments, rules, and precepts excite passions and produce or prevent actions" means, "moral judgments are derived from impressions sensed by a moral sense, by which we distinguish the odious from the pleasing; the impression of which causes us to approve or disapprove the character considered and thus to have an aversion to or propensity towards the object." When I sense that a character is bad this means I disapprove of it and thus avoid it or condemn those possessed of it. The "movement" in "morals move" has to do with the aversion to or propensity towards the object. The object becomes an object of desire if it is good or becomes an object to be avoided if it is bad. This is a rough statement of Hume's position, because it leave out the notion of the disinterested spectator which involves his considerations of sympathy. But it does illustrate what Hume means by the phrase "morals move".

What support does Hume offer for the assertion that "morals excite passions and produce or prevent actions?" Scarcely any, if one is considering only his explicit support of this assertion. He points out that "if morality had no influence or passions and actions, twere in vain to take such pains to inculcate it."(457) And he adds that morality is comprehended under practical philosophy, as opposed to merely speculative, and that the former is "supposed to influence our passions and actions, and to go beyond the calm and indolent judgments of the understanding."(457) One would be tempted to grant Hume his point were it not that he comes up with such unorthodox conclusions
conclusions as a result of these considerations. Thus we are led to ask whether such considerations do support his contention that morals move.

These considerations that Hume brings forward do support his claim (if it is taken as saying that as a matter of fact we are usually influenced by moral judgments and precepts) seem to be true enough. But this is not all that Hume wants to assert. It is not enough to make an observation about what moral beliefs usually do. Hume is saying that they must do this. It is the very essence of the perception of moral evil that we are moved by this perception to have an aversion to the object. It is not that as a matter of fact we are moved to avoid those things we dislike. There is, rather, a causal relation between the disliking or moral disapproval and our aversion to the object.

And the considerations Hume puts forward, in explicit argument to support his assertion that morals move, do not support this interpretation. It is true, that as a matter of fact, moral judgments do usually affect our actions, i.e., when we believe something morally bad we are driven away from it. But Hume is saying more than this. He is saying that they must affect our actions; they must cause us to move in relation to the object that is judged (or, more properly, felt) to be bad.

And it is in this much broader sense of "morals move" that we must consider Hume; and it is with this broader sense that we must now turn our attention, considering what he means, how he tries to establish it, and whether he is correct.
Hume is not just saying that as a matter of fact we are moved by moral considerations. For, sometimes we are not. And one might deny the first premise of his argument simply by pointing out that though they do often move us, it is not necessary that they move us. They might fail to move us and we would still consider that the judgment dictated what was moral. I might, for example, firmly believe that what I am about to do is wrong, but still do it. And this would destroy Hume's argument about the service of reason to the passions, for he decided their respective positions because reason was incapable of moving us to action, and thus could not be the source of moral distinctions which do move us to action. Thus Hume means more than that as a matter of fact morals move, he means that it is the very essence of a moral judgment, as the apprehension of the moral character of an action, to move us to action.

Nor does Hume mean that moral judgments or perceptions ought to move us to action. This would beg the whole question. To say that moral judgments ought to move us to action would be no more than to say that we ought to be moved by moral considerations, i.e., we ought to be moral. Hume, as I shall note at greater length later on, would deny that such an interpretation of "morals move" could even make sense. For when we make "morals move " mean "morals ought to move", and mean by this "we ought to be moved by moral considerations", we are making the primary motive of doing an act a sense of duty or acting out of respect to the moral worth of the action. And Hume contends that since it is only by means of virtuous motives that an act is called virtuous, then the first virtuous motive can never be a regard
to the virtue of the action, for to suppose that it was the regard
to virtue that rendered the action virtuous is to reason in a circle.
"Morals move", on Hume's view, cannot mean "one ought to be moved
by moral considerations."

What then does Hume mean when he claims that morals have an
influence on human actions? I have tried to point out that he means
that it is necessary that moral perceptions move us to action,
but I have not yet spelled this out and made clear what it means to
hold such a position. I shall now attempt to show all that is involved
in Hume's assertion that morals move. I shall try to point out what
all in involved in this seemingly small claim, and how Hume tries to
substantiate it. Then I shall evaluate his position, showing that
a restriction on what is allowed to count as a reason for doing an
action leads Hume to many of the conclusions he advances in the
Treatise of Morals.

In order to facilitate this discussion I shall deal primarily
with the notion of obligation. Now, there is an obvious connection
between Hume's discussions in section I, "Moral distinctions not
derived from reason", and his discussions in Part II of Book III,
concerning the artificial virtues. There is also a connection between
Section II of Part I, "Of the Moral Sense", and Part III of Book III,
"Of the Other Virtues and Vices". Section I and Part II both deal
with the motives and the motive power of reason. As seen in the last
chapter, the weight of the arguments in section I depend on the conclu-
sions found in Book II, Part III, section III; that reason can never
be a motive to action. Reason is impotent in this account. Part II
of Book III deals with the artificial virtues. They are artificial
precisely because there is no natural motive for them. Thus in Part I, section I, and Part II of Book III there is a link because of the common concern for motives. And it is in the discussion of Part II, "Of Justice and Injustice", that we truly come to realize what Hume means when he claims morals move. Let us now turn our attention to Part II of Book III, and also to Hume's discussion of the will and direct passions in Book II, Part III, sections I and II.

Since we are dealing with Hume's contention that morals move us to action it is appropriate to consider first his analysis of the will, and how we come to produce actions by its means. In "Of the will and direct Passions" Hume points out that though 'will' cannot be defined, we still know what it is we are talking about when we discuss the will by an awareness, or conscious of, the impression of knowingly giving rise to any new motion of the body or new perception of the mind. (399) Hume analyzes this notion of "giving rise to a motion of the body" and contends that our actions are determined or caused by our motives. He tries to show that the motions of the mind are like the motions of other bodies with respect to being caused or uncaused. Motions in both are caused, and none can be said to be uncaused. The motion of one body causes another body to move. This is causal connection in the physical world. But causal connection also operates in the realm of will and actions because it is, in all cases, a motive that causes us to move to action. "Our actions," Hume observes, "have a constant union with our motives, tempers, and circumstances." (401)

All actions of the will are caused by motives, and we infer
the motive from the action. "Motive", for Hume, means "cause of an action". If we were to ask, "Why did he do that?", the appropriate reply, as Hume sees it, is to give his motive for the action. Motives are causes of actions, and we will see the significance of this contention as we progress.

Hume makes a further observation at the close of his discussion on motives as causes of actions. In support of this contention he observes, "Now moral evidence is nothing but a conclusion concerning the actions of men, derived from the consideration of their motives, temper, and situation." (404) And this ties in with the discussion of justice and injustice in Part II of Book III. For this section begins with the same observation that the section on "Liberty and Necessity" concluded with.

Tis evident, that when we praise any actions, we regard only the motives that produced them, and consider the actions as signs or indications of certain principles in the mind and temper. The external performance has no merit. We must look within to find the moral quality. . . . But these actions are still considered as signs; and the ultimate object of our praise and approbation is the motive, that produced them. (477)

Actions are indications of motives, since they are the effects of them. From the actions we infer the motive or cause. We can do this so effectively because "there is a general course of nature in human actions, as well as in the operations of the sun and the climate." (402-3) Certain actions are caused by certain motives; the action and motive are constantly conjoined. And the motive is the object of moral praise or blame. When someone performs an action we praise or blame him according to whether the motive or cause of the action was praiseworthy or blameworthy. "All virtuous actions derive their
We have seen, thus far, that "motive" means "cause of an action." Actions are indicative of motives, and by a causal inference we infer the motives of the agent from his actions. It is the motives that are the objects of praise or blame, not the actions. Motives are praised or blamed because they indicate the character of the agent. The agent is virtuous if the motive for the action is virtuous. Thus, in our examination of Hume's contention that morals move we have found out that what is essential in moral judgments and actions is the motive. The motive is the object of praise or blame when we are judging another and it is that which is virtuous or vicious, thus giving the agent the character appropriate to it. Secondly, motives moves us to action. That is precisely their function. They are the causes of actions. Thus, if an action is the result of a virtuous motive, then the agent is praiseworthy. But this is not all that Hume wants to state.

In Part II of Book III, it becomes clear that Hume is making a much broader statement than the above. He is saying that if any action is subject to moral approval (or disapproval) there must be a natural motive for doing actions of that sort, and if no motive can arise by means of the conventions of men, then there is no moral praise or blame attached to the agent for doing or not doing actions of that sort. And this, as we shall see, is the essence of Hume's contention that morals move.

Hume's discussion of justice and injustice make the above point sufficiently clear. In his discussion of justice as an artificial
virtue he first set out to prove that justice could not be a natural virtue. What does the distinction between natural and artificial mean? If it were a natural virtue, then we would have a natural motive to do actions of that sort. Our very natures would cause us to do them. When there is no natural motive then there is no cause for moral praise or blame. Now, the motive for an action, that is, the cause of the action, can never be the regard for the virtue of the action itself. Since Hume has made motive the object of moral praise and blame and since an action is virtuous according to the agent's motives, then the agent cannot have as a motive for doing an action merely the regard to its virtue. As Hume put it,

... the first virtuous motive, which bestows a merit on any action, can never be a regard to the virtue of that action, but must come from some natural motive or principle. To suppose, that the mere regard to the virtue of the action may be the first motive, which produced the action, and rendered it virtuous, is to reason in a circle. Before we can have such a regard, the action must be really virtuous; and the virtue must be derived from some virtuous motive; and consequently the virtuous motive must be different from the regard to the virtue of the action. (478, underlines mine)

And Hume illustrates this argument with an extremely illuminating example. As an illustration Hume points out,

We blame a father for neglecting his child. Why? because it shows a want of natural affections, which is the duty of every parent. Were not the natural affections a duty, the care of children would not be a duty; and were impossible we could have the duty in our eye, in the attention we give to our offspring. In this case, therefore, all men suppose a motive to action distinct from a sense of duty. (478)

Hume explicitly makes the point that were there not this natural motive to do actions of this sort, we would not be morally bound to do them.

Consider a later statement on the same point, using the same example.
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, no one would lie under any such obligation. (518-9)

In this latter quote, Hume uses "natural inclination" whereas in the former he used "natural affection" and "motive". They are synonymous. For a motive is a cause of an action, it inclines us to do this rather than that. And if there were no natural motive, even in the case of our obligation to care for our children, there would be no moral obligation.

The very example Hume picked is perfect for making his point. Care for one's children is probably one obligation universally agreed upon. A man is really a moral reprobate if he neglects his children. But if you were to ask someone why he believes he has this obligation, the answer would probably be, "Every father feels an obligation to care for his children." If someone seriously asked why he should have to spend his time and money on his children we would certainly wonder at such depths of moral insensitivity. We might reply, "Why you're not human!" And this is precisely how Hume saw the situation. There is, and Hume is not concerned with why there is, a "natural" inclination or disposition to care for one's children. Hume seizes this easily recognizable point to illustrate that the whole realm of moral conviction is based on precisely the same structure as the "child-care" example. We have a duty when we have a natural motive or inclination to cause us to do actions of this sort. But what is more, were there no natural motive or inclination to cause us to do actions of this sort, then we would have no obligation to do them. The lack of a natural
motive to do actions of sort x means that actions of sort x are neither morally praiseworthy or blameworthy. If there is no motive, naturally inherent in human nature, or arising by human conventions and having its source in the necessities of human nature (an artificial virtue), then there is no reason to perform actions of that sort. Let us call this the "motive-reason principle" in Hume's ethics.

The motive-reason principle underlies the whole discussion in Hume's *Treatise of Morals*. I shall show this later on and shall point out the consequences of this principle, as well as why Hume was led to hold it. But the principle still needs to be further illustrated and substantiated as a crucial part of Hume's ethics. In order to do this I shall point out, as briefly as possible, how the basic ideas in Part II of Book III arise from the motive-reason principle, and how this discussion illustrates the important consequences of holding this principle.

From our previous considerations we have established "as an undoubted maxim, that no action can be virtuous or morally good, unless there be in human nature a motive to produce it, distinct from the sense of its morality." (479) But the very next thing Hume does, after making this statement, is to doubt the "undoubted maxim". For, if the only motives are natural motives, then the keeping of promises and paying of debts, for example, are not moral duties. Why? Because we have no natural motive to do actions of these sorts. We have only the sense of duty. And the underlying assumption, or hidden premise, in this argument is the motive-reason principle.
(1) Where there is no motive to do actions of a certain sort
there is no moral obligation to do them.
(2) There is no natural motive to keep promises or pay debts.
(3) Therefore, there is no moral obligation to keep promises or
pay debts.

Unless we are to throw out the major part of those actions we praise
and blame, we must find a motive for doing actions of this sort.

Notice that Hume does not throw out the motive reason principle,
or call it into question. This is the real undoubted maxim! He throws
out what he only a page before called the "undoubted maxim". For the
undoubted maxim was too narrow. It must be revised to read, "no
action can be virtuous or morally good, unless there be in human nature
a motive to produce it, arising naturally from human nature or artificially
from human contrivances or conventions which have their necessity in
human nature." And the task of Part II of Book III is to attempt
to show how these motives to keep promises and pay debts arise arti-
fically but still bind us morally. Part II of Book III is necessary
because of the motive-reason principle, and only because of this
principle.

Hume's whole argument, to establish that justice is an
artificial virtue, presupposes the motive-reason principle, and comes
about only because of this principle. He begins his study of the arti-
ficial virtues with an example familiar to all who have read this
section. If I have borrowed some money and the time comes to pay it
back, what if I asked; "What reason or motive have I to restore the
the money?" (479) As we have seen, I cannot reply, and claim as a justi-
fication of my repaying the loan, that it is my duty, or that one ought
always to repay loans. Hume considers this as a regard to the virtue
of the act, but then what makes the act virtuous?

Tis requisite then to find some motive to actions of justice and honesty, distinct from our regard to the honesty; and in this lies the great difficulty. (480)

If there can be found no natural motive then we must suppose, unless there are artificial motives, there is no reason to honor promises or pay debts. When Hume asks, "What reason or motive have I to restore the money?" he makes explicit the fundamental aspect of the motive-reason principle. The answers to the questions "why did he do that?" or "why should I do that?", are supplied when one points out that there is a motive for doing actions of that sort. This is the only kind of reason Hume finds acceptable as an answer to these questions. Motives are causes of actions, and to provide an explanation of the action is to provide an explanation of the action in terms of its causes. The only reasons Hume will allow as answers to these questions are exciting or explanatory reasons, i.e., an explanation of what caused the agent to act as he did; and Hume excludes any reason that is not of this causal type. And I shall try to make clear, later on, that causal explanations of the type offered, are different from justifying reasons, and that Hume is led to the conclusion he reaches because he does not distinguish between the two. But first, I must make clear that the only type of reason Hume allows is a motive-explanation and how this is all packed into his seemingly trivial contention that morals move.

In Part II we have seen that the lack of a natural motive for paying debts and keeping promises implies either that we are mistaken in supposing there are such obligations, or the motives that give rise to these obligations are not natural, i.e., do not arise
originally from human nature, and therefore must be artificial. They arise by means of the necessities of human nature, and the contrivances of men. The first alternative is implausible, and thus, Hume points out, "Tis requisite to find some motive to acts of justice and honesty, distinct from our regard to the honesty; and in this lies the great difficulty." (480)

In section II, of Part II, "Of the origin of Justice and Property", Hume sets himself two tasks: (1) to determine the manner in which the rules of justice are established, and (2) to show the reason that determines us to attribute to the observance or neglect of these duties a moral beauty or deformity. Hume answers these two questions as follows. (1) Men are induced originally to the observance of the rules of justice, property, and promises from self-interest. Human needs far outstrip human abilities, and to fulfill their needs men organize into societies, not by means of a promise, but by means of a covenant, as when two men pull the oars of a boat in unison, though they have not promised to do so. From this basis society arises, with the additional aid of men naturally being drawn together because of the natural sexual process that gives rise to the family unit. Governments are formed after societies in order to insure the stability of goods acquired by means of society. The reason a man recognizes the rules of society or government, and resolves to abide by them, is because it is in his self-interest. This is the motive or reason Hume puts forward to explain the origin of respect for the practices arising in societies. It is a non-moral motive, and thus is not subject to praise or blame.
(2) As society grows men lose sight of this original motive. They lose sight of the natural obligation to justice, viz., interest. But the natural obligation gives way, in a transition, to a moral obligation. A sentiment of right or wrong is attached to the performance of one's duties. The performance or non-performance of these duties gives rise to a feeling of easiness or uneasiness, which, by means of sympathy, is called vice or virtue. Thus, we have seen how Hume, operating from the motive-reason principle, has accounted for our obligation to respect the rules of justice by providing us with a motive derived ultimately from the necessities of human nature, though not from a natural motive to perform actions of that sort.

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. (499-500)

Further, we are to consider this distinction betwixt justice and injustice, as having two different foundations, viz., that of interest, when men observe, that 'tis impossible to live in society without restraining themselves by certain rules; and that of morality, when this interest is once observed, and men receive a pleasure from the view of such actions as tend to the peace of society, and an uneasiness from such as are contrary to it. (533)

In light of the above considerations of Hume's system we can now draw some conclusions concerning Hume's major premise, "Moral judgments, rules, and precepts excite passions and produce or prevent actions." Hume does not mean either that as a matter of fact we are moved to action by moral considerations, or that we ought to be moved by moral considerations. He is expressing something much broader than either of these. He maintains not only that we are moved to perform actions that are moral, but that these actions are moral precisely
because it is the character of the cause of these actions to be morally approved. All actions have causes, just as the motions of bodies are caused in the physical world. Actions are caused by motives and we infer the motives from the actions. Only motives are praiseworthy or blameworthy. They are the objects of moral praise or blame and an act is virtuous or vicious because of the agent's motives. Certain motives, e.g., benevolence, pity, love of one's children, etc., are morally good, and actions caused by them give rise to our praising or approving the agent. Other motives are not natural, but are artificial, e.g., justice and promise keeping; but there is a motive for doing actions of these sorts, and only because there are such motives are these actions morally approved.

Now, we know the motives are good because we immediately feel that they are good because the perception of them gives rise to a peculiar type of pleasure in our breast. It is by means of an impression that we distinguish vice from virtue. From this sentiment we derive our moral precepts, rules, and judgments. When Hume says it would be morally wrong, though not contrary to reason, "to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger" (416), he is trying to point out that this is known to be morally wrong not because such an action is contrary to reason, but because there is, in human nature, a natural motive to perform benevolent actions. Or, to take another example, one should always keep promises. Why? Because there is a motive or cause for doing so. Artificial though it be, it still has its foundation in the necessities of human nature. Moral precepts and rules move us to action because they are generalizations about the basic
sentiments and passions of human nature. They tell us what dispositions of human character are approved or disapproved of, that is, they tell us what things men have sentiments for or against. All moral obligation, then, depends upon there being motives for doing actions of the sort we claim to obligated to do. This is the support Hume puts forward for his first premise. He is contending that morals move us to action because there is a moral obligation where there is a motive, and there is only a moral obligation where there is a motive. And the reason Hume holds this position, that one only has a reason for doing an action when one has a motive, is, as I shall show, because he does not distinguish between exciting and justifying reasons.

Hoping I have made clear the intricacies of Hume's first premise, that morals move, I now want to evaluate his contention, and show that because of his mistaken belief that "giving a reason" means "giving a motive", he is led to the conclusion that one only has an obligation where one has a motive. If I can show that Hume cannot support this conclusion, then he has not established that morals move us to action.

When Hume uses the term motive he means by it 'cause of an action'. The question, "why did he do that?", is answered by giving the motive of the agent. Further, motives are the object of moral praise or blame, and our knowledge of the agent's motives is inferred from the actions they produce. The sole type of reason allowed by Hume in moral discourse is the motive reason. "What reason or motive have I to do that?" can only be answered by showing that there is a natural or artificial motive or impulse in human nature to do and
approve acts of that sort. But is it the case that there is a motive for
every act, and that the motive is the cause of the act? Are motives
causes at all? Just what is a motive, and is Hume correct in his
description of them as causes of actions?

The problem of the nature of motives has become one of
considerable difficulty and discussion since Ryle's declaration that
motives are not causes. Though I do not believe Ryle correct in all
he says about motive-explanations, I do believe he is correct in his
contention that motives are not causes. His argument is as follows:

(1) All causes are occurrences.
(2) Motives are not occurrences.
(3) Therefore, motives are not causes.

Hume certainly accepts (1), that all causes are occurrences, and he
holds that motives are causes, and that they are occurrences. When
we say they are occurrences we mean that they are things that happen
like little episodes, such that they are clockable, like twinges or
aches. And this is how Hume conceives them. Motives are, according to
Hume, impulses to actions, desires, propensities, aversions, and feelings.
They can be either violent or calm, and the calm ones are often con-
 fused with the effects of the understanding. All theses indicate that
Hume took motives to be occurrences.

But if motives are not occurrences, then they are not causes.
Ryle's considerations in support of (2), that motives are not occur-
rences, is convincing. If we explain why Joe boasts, we do it in terms

2Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind (New York: Barnes and Noble
Inc., 1949).
of a motive explanation; we say because he is vain. But this is not a
causal explanation. There are no pricks, feelings, or impulses of
vanity that cause Joe to boast. If there were such episodes, that caused
the actions, he "must therefore be able to tell us whether these feelings
are sudden, like twinges, or lasting like aches; whether they succeed
one another several times a minute or only a few times an hour; and whether
he feels them in the small of his back or in his forehead. But clearly
his only reply to such specific questions is that he catches himself
experiencing no peculiar throbs or qualms... Motives are not
as Hume has characterized them. They do not function as causes of
our actions.

Just by way of comment, I might add that it is peculiar that
Hume held that motives are causes, and that we infer the agent's
motives from his actions. For it would seem that the inference would
be impossible. We can only have a causal inference, according to Hume,
where we have repeatedly experienced the constant conjunction of
the cause with the effect. But we never experience another's motives.
They are forever hidden from us. Thus, on Hume's own position about
causal inferences, there cannot be an inference from the actions (effects)
to the cause (motives). If we claim to know the motives at all it would
have to be by means of an analogy. We would have to say that just as
motive x is the cause of action y in my person, so, by way of analogy,
when I see another doing action y, I suppose him to have motive x as

3Ibid., p. 85.
its cause. The motive is known, if at all, by means of analogy. And in light of Hume's critique of the argument by means of analogy in the Dialogues on Natural Religion, we must suppose that he would be just as averse to our supposing that actions in others are caused by motives like our own, when the other person's motives are forever hidden from our view.

What then are motives? Ryle's answer is that they are dispositional properties. To say a man boasts because he is vain means that he has the dispositional property, vanity, which "could be unpacked in such expressions as 'whenever situations of a certain sort have arisen, he has always or usually tried to make himself prominent'. . ." 4 Motives are referred to in giving answers to questions like, "why did he do that?" A causal answer to a question of this type might be, for example, "because of a muscle spasm." But a motive explanation would be something like, "Because he is vain". Motive explanations are not causal explanations, but are, rather, the subsumption of the action under a particular law-like proposition. Thus, Ryle construes motives as tendencies or propensities to do certain types of actions in certain specific situations. And we know one's motives by inference from one's past behavior, and form, inductively, a generalization that will explain why he acts as he does in situations of a certain sort.

I believe Ryle is correct that motives are not causes, but he is incorrect in saying that they are dispositions, propensities, or

4Ibid., p. 85.
tendencies. In the first place, this still has a faint flavor of the causal interpretation of motives, and secondly, it misconstrues the actual function of the term 'motive'. I shall try to show that Ryle is wrong in claiming that a motive is some kind of thing. Ryle's belief that motives are dispositions, tendencies, or propensities, makes motives the kinds of things that are featured in our explanations of human conduct. But they are not the things featured in our explanations, but rather are a specific kind of explanation. To ask for the motive of the action is to ask for a specific kind of reason the agent had or might have had for doing what he did. We say that the motive or reason for his actions was such and such a motive. I believe the confusion about motives, and the fact that they are confused with things that can be motives (or the reasons for the agent's doing the action), arises from the fact that we can say the same things about motives and the things that can be featured in motive explanations. But motives are explanations of why someone did what he did in terms of dispositions, tendencies, propensities, goals, etc.

Let us take an example to illustrate this point. Let us consider why, in the Crito, Socrates did not take the opportunity to escape from prison rather than die. Certainly such an action stands in need of an explanation, since Socrates was guilty of no crime, and no one ever expected him to die as a result of the charges against him. There are two significant ways to answer the question "Why didn't Socrates escape from prison?" The first way is to give an explanatory reason, and in

this case that would be to specify the end or purpose Socrates had in staying in prison. "What could have been his motive for doing a thing like that?" The question really sound peculiar, because we would really only ask "why would he do that?" The question itself implies that we want to know what motive he could possibly have had for doing such an insane thing. We are asking for a specific type of explanation, i.e., a motive explanation. The reply to the question in a case like the one we are considering would be in terms of the ends or purposes of his action. Motive explanations are characterized by the kind of answer received, and the answer will be in terms of purposes or ends of the action. Thus, we can say of Socrates that his motive for staying in prison rather than escaping was unjust. Ryle might "unpack" this and say that "in situations where questions of right and wrong arose, Socrates always did what he believed to be right." This was one of the characteristics of Socrates, and he encouraged us to "tend our souls" so as to cultivate similar dispositions. Such is the explanation of Socrates' actions, and we see "motive of his action" means "what reason did he have for doing what he did?" And the answer to this type of question is given in terms of the character traits, dispositions, tendencies, etc., of the person. Thus, one type of answer to the question "why did he do that?", is an answer that gives us the motive, or reason, he had in doing as he did, and thus explaining his action. This is to give an explanatory reason, but one of a specific type (the motive type).

"To point out the motive of the action is not the only way the action can be explained, and certainly not the only answer to
"why did he do that?" We get some idea of just how far Hume misconstrued motives when we realize that all explanations are not motive explanations, and that to give a motive explanation of an action is only one type of answer to the question "why did he do that?" Consider some of the other types of explanations that are not motive explanations. There are reflex acts which are causally explained, and involve no motive at all, e.g., "why did he jerk his leg?" Also, actions done from force of habit are not done from motives. Unintentional actions, or ones performed by accident or mistake, are not explained by the agent's motives. Actions which are the direct expression of a mood or emotion, e.g., when one yawns from boredom, are not explained in terms of the agent's motives. Let us consider this latter case for a moment, for it reveals another characteristic of motive explanations.

Were I to ask, "Why is he eating?" the reply would be "hunger." Were I to ask "What is his motive for eating?", I would, in all likelihood, meet with a puzzled expression. Hunger is a motive for stealing, but it is not a motive for eating. One reason for this is that a motive explanation is most often used to assess someone's conduct by stating a reason which the agent had for departing from an established expectation. We do not usually ask for the motives of getting married or playing chess. Take our example in the Crito. Socrates does depart from an established expectation. Everyone expected him to escape. That was


why it was so easy for Crito to arrange it. The dialogue would never
be read if everybody did what Socrates did. If not escaping and losing
one's life as a result were as common as getting married, then no one
would care why Socrates did what he did. But what could have impelled
him to do such a mad thing? Crito just couldn't understand. Was Socrates
a fool? To ask why he did it is to seek an answer that will tell us
the reason he had for departing from an established expectation. And
so it is in the cases of court trials and detective stories. The detec­tive, for example, might reason as follows: "now x is not a killer at
heart, but could he have had a motive for killing his rich uncle?" Was
there a reason for departing from the expected pattern? The answer
would be in terms of certain dispositions or tendencies x had, e.g., his
love of money, which explains the action by pointing to a character
trait that set for x an end that could possibly be reached by killing
his uncle. The motive explanation states the objective of the action,
and we can only discern the motive after we have some knowledge about
the character of the individual involved. If x had killed his uncle
just for the sake of killing, we would say he had no motive.

To assign a motive for an action is to explain it in terms of
an end towards which it is directed. It is to explain an action in
terms of some further end to be achieved by the action. And we ask
for such an explanation when we are puzzled by the agent's action because
it was not expected. The statement of the motive is usually the first
step towards justifying the action. It establishes the objective or
purpose of the action and we can thus evaluate the agent's action in
terms of whether what he wanted was worthwhile or not, and whether
he was justified in doing what he did in order to fulfill his aims. And this brings forth the main type of reason we are asking for when, in moral discourse, we ask the question, "Why did he do that?" For it is one thing to explain the action, but quite another to justify it; though both of these are reasons why he did what he did.

Consider again the example of Socrates. There is no real concern about Socrates' motives. We do ask why he did what he did and want an answer in terms of the ends he wished to achieve by acting in that manner; and we ask this question because what he did was out of the ordinary. But we ask for this explanation, in cases where moral judgments are involved, mainly as a means of finding the aims the agent had in mind, and we seek to know these in order to see whether his action was justified or not. Plato gives us the reasons Socrates had for doing what he did. To escape would be to do an injustice, which is worse than having an injustice done to you. Socrates had accepted Athenian law for seventy years, and he had no right to deny their jurisdiction now that they had condemned him. And after all, it was not the laws that were unjust, but the men who had condemned him unjustly. Escaping would hurt the laws, which he loved, and thus only bring about evil. And consider the example for his children. And where would he go? Who really wants an exile? Rather die like a man than run like a dog. Socrates is called upon by Crito to tell why he was doing this insane thing. And Socrates attempts to justify his actions, as seen in the above points, and not merely explain them. How far Hume was from the truth can be seen in his utter disregard
for this distinction between explanatory and justifying reasons. He sought only motive reasons, and disregarded justifying reasons, which are not the same as motive reasons since to give the agent's motive is not, in itself, to justify his course of action. Hume was a slave to one type of reason - the causal reason. To have the reason for doing x meant being able to give a motive for doing x. The mental world had its causes (motives) just as the physical world had its pushes, forces, and motions. When Hume tells us he is going to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects, never doubt his word. The experimental method is the explanation of phenomena in terms of its causes, discerning these causes from experience. Hume was to be the Newton of the mind, and he tells us this explicitly in the introductions of both the Treatise and the Enquiry. Science operated only on the poorest principles of reasoning, Hume tells us,

till a philosopher, at last, arose, who seems, from the happiest reasoning, to have also determined the laws and forces, by which the revolutions of the planets are governed and directed. The like has been performed with regard to other parts of nature. And there is no reason to despair of equal success in our enquiries concerning the mental powers and economy, if prosecuted with equal capacity and caution. (E. 14)

That Hume never deviated from this endeavor I have no reason to doubt. That he failed in it, I have tried to show.

We can now bring together all the various strands of this chapter and point out what all is involved in Hume's seemingly simple assertion that morals move. We have seen that he means more than that as a matter of fact they move us to action. He means that they must move us to action. His analysis of how we are moved to action contended that there are motives, the mental counterparts of the forces and motions
in the physical world, that cause our actions. Motives are causes of actions. We then saw that motives also are the sole object of moral praise or blame. The agent is praised when he acts according to his natural motives. These motives cause us to have an impulse to do certain kinds of actions and to approve or disapprove actions of a certain sort. It is only because we are naturally moved to do actions of a certain sort, and approve or disapprove actions of a certain sort, that we can say there is an obligation to do them. It is because we have a motive that we have an obligation, and were there no motive there would be no obligation. And we saw that Hume's lengthy discussion of the artificial virtues rested on the motive-reason principle, whereby the only reason the agent has for supposing he has an obligation to do an action is to point out that there is a natural motive for doing actions of that sort. Motives are causes - and the only reasons Hume accepts in any inquiry are causal reasons.

But on analysis we found that motives are not causes, nor or they any sort of thing that might be construed as the mental counterparts of the forces and motions of the physical world. They are, as a matter of fact, answers to specific types of questions about behavior that is out of the ordinary and can best be understood, and subsequently justified, if we know what aims or goals the agent had in mind when doing the act he did. And explanations, much less motive explanations, are not the only reasons we want or expect when we ask "why did he do that?" We also want justifying reasons. The same considerations apply to the question "What should I do?" For here we are not seeking
only a reason that will be what Hume calls a motive, i.e., a reason that will give us an incentive, or the desire to do the act, but we are asking what course of action should be taken in this situation. And the course of action that should be taken is that course of action which is supported by the best reasons. And this is what we mean by justifying a moral decision. Thus, we seek justifying reasons in moral discourse, not merely explanatory ones. We want to know which course of action is the right course of action. Which is supported by the best reasons. In explanations we are concerned only with pointing out why the agent was moved to do what he did. And Hume allows only for these explanatory reasons when he speaks of giving a reason for taking a course of action. He does this because of his concern for causal explanations. Only because he overlooks this distinction between explanatory and justifying reasons does he come to the conclusion that "moral judgments, rules, and precepts excite passions and produce or prevent actions." For he has limited the role of reason to that of giving explanatory or exciting reasons. But he can only do this if he has already shown that reason cannot also justify the course of action one takes. Hume assumes throughout his discussion on morals that reason can provide but one type of explanation, i.e., causal. I have tried to show that his considerations in support of this restricted notion of the function of reason do not support his claims. Hume's first premise, that morals move, can only be supported if he assumes that reason can only serve to explain, but can never justify moral decisions. And since this is implicit in the first premise of his
argument to establish that moral distinctions are not derived from reason, he cannot use this argument to establish the limits of reason in moral decisions without begging the question. And since this premise is not established on other grounds, as I have tried to show, then Hume has not shown that reason serves the passions in moral decisions, and cannot be the basis by which we distinguish right from wrong.
CHAPTER V

HUME'S CRITIQUE OF THE RATIONALISTS

Thus far we have been considering Hume's answer to the question "whether tie by means of our ideas or impressions we distinguish between vice and virtue, and pronounce an action blameable or praiseworthy?" (456) And Hume's answer is that moral distinctions are not derived from reason. Thus, in the Treatise of Morals we are studying impressions and not ideas. Now the conclusion of my examination of Hume's arguments to establish this point was that Hume did not successfully defend his position. Further, I pointed out that the fundamental argument in Hume's ethics rested on certain basic misconceptions about the uses of reason and the types of reasons we seek when we are concerned with making moral decisions and justifying them. We saw that Hume had an unduly narrow conception of reason when he restricted it solely to the means-end type of justification. Secondly, we saw that he further failed to distinguish exciting or explanatory reasons from justifying reasons, collapsing both into the former. The failure to make this distinction gave rise to Hume's incorrect conception of motives as causes of actions and as the sole objects of praise or blame. 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, I tried to show, a fundamental misconception in Hume's Treatise of Morals 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 or wrong, but rather by an impression or feeling.

In the next two chapters I intend to show how this concern for a motive reason underlies most of the subsequent considerations of the first section of Book III of the Treatise. I shall point out that Hume's basic assumption that morals move, and all that is packed away in this claim, underlies, for the most part, his attacks against the rationalists. The main part of Hume's attack against the rationalists can be summarized in his statement that "tis one thing to know virtue, and another to conform the will to it." (465) And this is to say that even if the rationalists could show that we know a priori that an action is right, this, by itself, would not entail that we have an obligation to do that act. And Hume's reason for holding this is, as we have seen, that he believes that reason cannot supply a motive to action, i.e., cannot cause us to act, and if we lack a motive, either a natural or artificial one, we cannot be said to have a moral obligation. I shall show how Hume's conception of reason underlies his attack against the rationalists, and by doing this further substantiate and illustrate the arguments and conclusions of the last two chapters.

The main argument in support of the conclusions of section I are, as pointed out, really in Book II. These we have examined. The first really complete argument in section I is a repeat of an argument from Book II. It is what I call the "original-fact argument", and goes like this:
(1) Reason is the discovery of truth or falsehood.

(2) Truth or falsehood consists in an agreement or disagreement either of real relations of ideas or to real existence and matter of fact. (Argued for in Book I of the *Treatise*)

(3) Whatever is not susceptible to either type of agreement or disagreement cannot be true or false, thus can never be an object of reason.

(4) Passions, volitions, actions are original facts and realities, complete in themselves, implying no reference. (Argued for in Book II)

(5) Therefore, passions, volitions, and actions cannot be pronounced true or false, or contrary or conformable to reason. (458)

Hume claims this argument proves two things. First of all, "it proves directly, that actions do not derive their merit from a conformity to reason, nor their blame from a contrariety to it. . . ." (458) But this conclusion is ambiguous, and the ambiguity arises from the peculiar ways we talk about actions when using terms like 'true' or 'false' and 'reasonable' or 'unreasonable.' Hume is correct if his conclusion means that actions, strictly speaking, are neither true nor false and neither valid nor invalid. Propositions are true or false, and arguments valid or invalid, but actions are neither of these. Now this could be considered an adequate criticism of Wollaston if we held him strictly to his way of speaking when he says that actions are either true or false, consistent or inconsistent with the nature of things. In this sense actions are not, as Hume points out, true or false, consistent or inconsistent. But there is another sense in which we do use these terms when speaking of actions and do apply them to actions. We might hear someone say of an action
Jones performed that it was inconsistent with what one expected of Jones, or one might even say, and what he would say would be very intelligible and proper, that Jones' actions contradict what he says he believes or that Jones' actions contradict what he says he believes or that Jones' actions are inconsistent with the principles he espouses. More often we hear the terms 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' applied to actions. We say things like "that was certainly an unreasonable thing to do." Further, we are implored, and implore others, to "be reasonable." Hume claims to have shown that even these significations, when applied to actions, are incorrect, for, as he put it to illustrate his point, "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 choose my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an Indian or person wholly unknown to me." (416) Hume deliberately picks examples we would ordinarily call unreasonable, for he intends to say that actions can never to said to be reasonable or reasonable. Hume claims that the "original-fact" argument proves that it never makes sense to speak of an action as reasonable or unreasonable. Unless we desire the end, we will not do the action. And desire is neither reasonable nor unreasonable, being an original existence. Hume again illustrates his restricted conception of reason and the role he assigns it of determining means to ends. But we have seen that the means-end conception of reason is unjustified, and that this broader sense of actions and passions being neither reasonable nor unreasonable, is not necessarily implied by the "original-fact" argument.
What, then, is implied by the argument? I believe it true, that in one sense actions are neither true nor false, consistent or inconsistent. Only propositions are these things. But we do speak of actions being "reasonable" or "unreasonable" and "consistent" or "inconsistent"; though probable not of them as being either "true" or "false." An action is either consistent or inconsistent with the principles one espouses. We generally use only the term 'inconsistent' and it is a term used to blame the agent. "Actions speak louder than words" expresses our usage here. The terms 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' are used even more often than 'inconsistent' and they have a broader function. For example, when we say Jones is blameworthy by pointing out that what he did was inconsistent with the principles of the brotherhood, we are arguing hypothetically. We are not actually committing ourselves to whether the action itself was right or wrong, nor are we saying that one ought to be loyal to the principles of the brotherhood. We are only arguing that since Jones holds such and such principles, and since they would not dictate or justify actions of the sort he did, then he did the wrong thing. Thus, Jones' actions are inconsistent with the principles he espouses. The terms 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' are broader in scope than the term 'inconsistent' and are not used solely in terms of hypothetical considerations. Nor are they only to blame the agent. They also are used to signify the character of the act, as to whether it was right or wrong. When we say someone has acted unreasonably we mean that there were good reasons for him not acting as he did. If we say that what Jones did was unreasonable we are saying that Jones cannot bring forward
good reasons for taking the course of action he did take. Jones cannot justify what he did - it was unreasonable. Now, when we apply to actions these terms that Hume claims are applied only to propositions and their relations, we are saying that the course of action taken either was, or was not, that course of action that can be supported by reasons. When we say "there was no reason for him to do that" we mean that the action was unreasonable in that it could not be justified as the best course of action. Even though Jones inherited a million dollars when he killed his rich uncle, we say he had no reason for doing what he did. He had a motive all right, and it can be easily recognized. But no one believes that just because he inherited all that money he was justified in killing the old man. We say that was not a good reason for doing as you did. And further, we say there are no good reasons for doing what you did. Your act cannot possibly be justified. But what then is the right course of action? It is that course of action supported by the best reasons. And Hume has not shown that the terms 'reasonable', 'unreasonable', 'contrary to reason', 'in conformity with reason', and 'inconsistent' do not apply to actions in this latter sense that I have been discussing. This is the sense that is important to moral discourse, and not merely the limited sense of the application of these terms that does follow from the "original-fact" argument. And Hume had in mind this broader sense, since he did not distinguish if from the narrower sense. But they are not the same and we can speak strictly and philosophically using both senses without involving ourselves in any inconsistencies
in our thought about the nature of reason and whether actions are reasonable or unreasonable, in conformity with or contrary to reason.

Secondly, Hume also claims for the "original-fact" argument that it proves indirectly "that as reason can never immediately prevent or produce any action by contradicting or approving of it, it cannot be the source of moral good and evil, which are found to have that influence." (458) And, of course, this does not follow at all from the premises of the "original-fact" argument. The conclusion of that argument, if you will recall, is "passions, volitions, and actions cannot be pronounced either true or false and be either contrary or conformable to reason." And that this is synonymous with, or even remotely connected with, the assertion "as reason can never produce or prevent any action . . . it cannot be the source of moral good or evil, which are found to have that influence" is altogether inconceivable. For this latter assertion, if you will motive, is nothing but the argument we examined in the last two chapters. And only after this has been proven does the "original-fact" argument have any bearing on the role of reason in moral discourse. Hume's claim that the "original-fact" argument proves indirectly this latter assertion is grossly mistaken.

Hume concludes, from the "original-fact" argument and all he believes it entails, that "Actions may be laudable or blameable; but they cannot be reasonable or unreasonable; Laudable or blameable, therefore, are not the same with reasonable or unreasonable." (458) This is the conclusion Hume wants to draw in section I, and this is
what he means when he says moral distinctions are not derived from reason. From this conclusion, that actions are neither reasonable nor unreasonable, Hume concludes that moral distinctions must be derived from a moral sense.

According to the moral sense theory an action is judged virtuous if it causes a pleasure of a particular kind. The impressions arising from virtue are agreeable and those proceeding from vice disagreeable. (470) The very feeling we have, Hume contends, constitutes our praise or blame. "We do not infer a character is virtuous because it pleases: But in feeling that it pleases after such a particular manner, we in effect feel that it is virtuous." (471) Thus, the sum of section II, "Moral distinctions derived from a moral sense," is that "Morality, therefore, is more properly felt than judged of; tho' this feeling or sentiment is commonly so soft and gentle, that we are apt to confound it with an idea . . . ." (470) And this follows from the considers of Section I which we have been considering. Hume says, in this section,

The vice (of willful murder) entirely escapes you as long as you consider the object. You can never find it, till you turn your reflections into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you towards this action. Here is a matter of fact; but tis an object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object. (468-9)

And what things does the moral sense approve of or disapprove of? Is there any uniformity in approvals and disapprovals of mankind? And Hume's answer is that the moral sense approves of the things it does approve of because there are certain dispositions in human nature that.
cause it to approve of certain things. We have a feeling of approval with regard to benevolent actions because there is a natural passion in human nature to approve of these actions. We approve of keeping promises because of a motive, though it arises artificially, which causes us to have a peculiar kind of pleasure when we view an action of this sort. The things we approve of are the things we have natural or artificial motives for approving or disapproving. If human nature lacked these natural motives, desires, inclinations, dispositions, or what have you, to approve the things it does approve, then men would be under no obligation to do these sorts of things. Because we have these motives there are approvals and disapprovals, these feelings about the moral worth of an object. But if we lacked these, then there would be no moral distinctions.

I have made this brief mention of the moral sense theory to show two things. First, it is evident that the moral sense theory, in Hume's opinion, is a necessary consequence of his conclusions in section I. Since we distinguish good from evil, and those things that are laudable are not the same as those things that are reasonable, and since blameable does not mean unreasonable, then we do not praise or blame anything by means of ideas. Since we do not make moral distinctions by means of ideas, then we must make them by means of impressions. Thus, the moral sense theory. The second reason I have for mentioning the moral sense theory is to show what Hume is driving at when he concludes, from section I, that moral distinctions cannot be derived by reason, but are derived by means of impressions.
I have tried to show, however, that the "original-fact" argument, which is the main argument in section I, does not give rise to the conclusions Hume draws from it. I have tried to point out that there is a sense in which it is appropriate to speak of actions as reasonable and unreasonable. If I have been correct, and Hume has not shown that actions cannot be reasonable or unreasonable, contrary to reason, then he is not justified in making his jump to the moral sense theory.

With the above conclusions from the "original-fact" argument Hume considers his point proven, that moral distinctions are not derived from reason. The considerations that follow, in this section of the Treatise, are illustrations of his arguments, considerations of possible objections, and attempts to meet these objections, and the application of his conclusions to the rationalists' position. The first thing Hume does is to attempt to point out exactly what the role of reason is in moral decisions. Certainly it plays some role, though by itself it cannot make moral distinctions. As we have seen, an action cannot be contradictory, but, Hume contends, "we may find such a contradiction in some of the attendants of the action, that is, in its causes or effects." (459) Hume goes on to say, and this statement is most revealing,

The action may cause a judgment, or it may be obliquely caused by one, when the judgment concurs with a passion; and by an abusive way of speaking, which philosophy will scarce allow of, the contrariety may, upon that account, be ascribed to the action. (459)

In this quote we see again that the only kind of reason Hume allows in moral discourse is the causal reason. The "abusive way of speak-
ing" is when we claim, according to Hume, that reason causes actions. Hume is correct that reason never causes actions, but he is not correct in what he means by this and the conclusions he draws from it. There is something odd in speaking of reason causing actions. In answer to the question "What caused him to do that?" one would be a bit puzzled at the reply, "Reason caused him to do that," though one would not be puzzled at the reply, "His passions caused him to do that." We don't speak of reason as causing the agent to act. We do speak of them as justifying the actions taken, but this is not exactly the same as saying they cause the agent to take a course of action. We speak of the agent as deliberating a course of action, and because of such and such a reason he did what he did. And we say that certain reasons influenced the agent's decision or course of action. But we don't speak of the reasons as the cause of the action. Of the two types of reasons I have discussed, explanatory and justifying, we do not speak of either type of reason as producing or causing our actions. With regard to explanations of why an agent did what he did, we do, as a matter of fact, point out the agent's circumstances and situation, and may even point out, which is quite proper, that his love for his family, for example, caused him to run into the burning house. "What caused him to do that?" is surely one type of question we ask in moral discussions. But to take this question, as Hume does, as supposing the answer to a broader question, "Can an action be caused by reason by itself or only by passions?", is fundamentally a mistake. We might point out, as an explanation of an agent's action, that he did what he
did because he was overcome by emotion. But this only one type of reason we can give. For we might also want to know whether what he did was right or wrong, and here we are asking for justifying reasons for the action, and we do not expect, nor will we accept, a causal explanation. "Did he follow the best course of action?" is a question whose answer is fundamentally different from "What caused him to do that?" That Hume collapses these two, and considers only explanatory or exciting reasons is obvious in the next paragraph, when he speaks in the following manner.

It has been observed, that reason, in a 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 connections of causes and effects, so as to afford us a means of exerting any passion. These are the only kinds of judgments, which can accompany our actions, or can be said to produce them in any manner. . . . (459) (underlines mine)

Hume, in the above quote, speaks of reason as causing, influencing, or producing actions only in an indirect manner. And when he says reason can only obliquely influence actions he means reason can only obliquely cause or produce actions. And I don't suppose we ever hear, as an answer to the question "Why did he do that?", the reply "Reason caused him to do it." For example, in the Crito, when Socrates decides to remain in jail, we do not say that reason caused him to stay there. We say that the reason he stayed there (justifying reason) was because he believed it better to suffer injustice than do injustice; to violate the laws is to do an injustice; therefore he should remain in prison and suffer an unjust execution. Crito pleads with Socrates, "Take
my advice, and be reasonable." And further, "Socrates, on every
ground; take my advice and please don't be unreasonable." And
Crito puts forward some very persuasive reasons why Socrates should
escape. But Socrates replies, "My dear Crito, I appreciate your warm
feelings very much -- that is, assuming that they have some justifi-
cation; if not, the stronger they are, the harder they will be to
deal with. Very well then; we must consider whether we ought to follow
your advice or not. You know that this is not a new idea of mind;
it has always been my nature never to accept advice from any of my
friends unless reflection shows they are the best course that reason
offers." Reason dictates the actions that ought to be taken, but it
does not cause actions. We do an action when we believe there are
good reasons for so doing. Reason influences actions because we seek
to follow the best course of action. And the best course of action is
the one supported by the best reasons. The whole issue, whether reason
can or cannot cause actions, is a pseudo issue. No one ever supposed
it did. Certainly philosophers have held that reason can influence
our moral decisions and that we ought to do what reason dictates. But
this is not the same as saying that reason causes actions. When
Hume denies that reason causes actions he is thinking of "cause" as
a push, impulse, etc., such as is characteristic of our desires and
impulses. Hume is right that reason does not cause our actions as

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1 Plato, Crito, translated by Hugh Tredennick in The Last Days
2 Ibid., p. 83.
3 Ibid., p. 83.
these things do. But it does not follow that because it does not do this that it cannot influence our actions. It is even further from the truth to suppose that since morals do move, and since reason does not move us (like desires, impulses, etc.) that therefore moral distinctions cannot be derived by means of reason. A discussion of the role of reason in moral decisions certainly should deal with the uses and extent of reason in making moral decisions and in justifying these. And Hume touches on these issues when he argues that reason cannot justify ultimate ends. But the weight of his discussion about the respective roles of reason and passion in morals rests upon his contention that reason cannot cause actions whereas passions can. It seems to me that one reason Hume raises the question of the role of reason in morals in the way he does is because he is trying to introduce the experimental method into moral subjects. And this means that the only reasons that can be given to explain phenomena are causal reasons. But this is much too narrow. The reason he is exclusively concerned with exciting or explanatory reasons is because he is exclusively concerned with causal inferences. And since justifying reasons are not causal reasons, Hume does not consider them as reasons at all.

Hume's considerations, as to the moral praise or blame attached to judgments that obliquely cause actions and judgments caused by actions, are incorrect. Errors in judgments often do subject the agent to moral disapproval, though not in all cases, since the error in judgment may have been unavoidable. Hume is wrong when he says
that we never blame a person when he has made an error in judgment. We do often do this. In speaking of the judgments caused by actions Hume is right that it is never the judgment in a spectator, which arises because of an action, that determine whether the act was right or wrong. But no one ever thought so. With regard to the judgments that Hume says "obliquely cause" an action, we can say, then, that these are certainly considered in praising or blaming the agent. And this would lead us to believe that the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the action has something to do with moral praise or blame.

In this chapter we have thus far considered the main argument presented in section I of Book III. We have also considered Hume's account of the role of reason as an indirect cause of actions and how he is led to make the mistake of giving reason a subservient role in morals because of his preoccupation with causal reasons. The next part of section I, which we now have to consider, is his attack against the rationalists.

In considering Hume's attack on the rationalists I do not care to go into great detail on each argument. I shall consider these arguments only in so far as they (1) illustrate my thesis that Hume is preoccupied with motive or exciting reasons, and (2) in so far as they illustrate Hume's contention that moral judgments must move us to action in a certain manner, and that unless we have a motive we have no obligation.

In order to show "that those eternal immutable fitnesses of things cannot be defended by sound philosophy," (463) Hume puts forward the following consideration. If the rationalists hold that morality
is susceptible to demonstration, and by demonstration Hume means either intuitive or demonstrative certainty, then vice and virtue must consist in some relation since a matter of fact is incapable of giving certainty. This, as we have seen, is precisely the character of fittingness: an act is right in so far as it is fitting to the situation.

Hume, however, challenges the rationalists to point out the relations which constitute morality or obligation so we can see them. Now since he holds that only four relations admit to certainty (resemblance, contrariety, degrees of quality, and proportions in quantity and number) he rules out the possibility of vice and virtue being a relation yielding certainty, because none of these four relations can be used to make moral distinctions. The reason these relations cannot be used is that all of these relations are applicable to inanimate as well as animate objects and irrational as well as rational creatures, and therefore even these objects would be susceptible to merit or demerit. Since morality does not lie in any of these relations then morality is not susceptible to demonstration.

I do not believe Hume has really presented an argument against the rationalists in the above considerations. He has done no more than offer a counter-statement to their position, and he has not refuted their position. For the very point to be proven is that there are only these four sources of a priori knowledge. The rationalists contend, of course, that these are not the only sources of a priori knowledge, for Clark, Wollaston, and Price hold that another
example of a priori knowledge is our knowledge of the distinction between right and wrong. Price, for example, agrees with Hume that moral judgments are not matter of fact judgments. But he rejects Hume's position that they are therefore impressions, and argues that they are a priori ideas. He holds that the understanding itself is a source of ideas and contends, "As bodily sight discovers to us visible objects; so does the understanding (the eye of the mind and infinitely more penetrating) discover to us intelligible objects; and thus, in a like sense with bodily vision, becomes the inlet of new ideas." Price believes it is undeniable, that many of our ideas are derived from our intuition of truth, or the discernment of the nature of things by the understanding. This might be the source of our ideas of right and wrong. Hume has done nothing to prove otherwise. He has shown them simple ideas, but then hastily jumps to an implanted sense. But he has not proved that virtue is felt, and not understood. And, as Price puts it, "the truth seems to be that in contemplating the actions of moral agents, we have both a perception of the understanding, and a feeling of the heart; and that the latter [are] effects in us accompanying our moral perceptions."  

That Hume was aware of the mere counter-statement character of the above argument seems evident when he says that if "our enumer-

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ation was not complete when we comprehended all demonstrable relations under four heads (64) it would still be incumbent upon the rationalists to point out this other relation. And if they attempt to point out this other relation, whatever it might be, Hume contends that they must meet two conditions.

The first condition is this: As moral good and evil belong only to the actions of the mind, and are derived from our situation with regard to external objects, the relations, from which the 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. (465)

If the relation could belong to internal objects singly, we could be guilty of crimes against ourselves. And, if it will apply to external objects, then even inanimate objects would be characterized by moral deformity or beauty.

Before considering the second condition the rationalists must fulfill, I would like to point out that the often mentioned examples that Hume uses of ingratitude, or parricide, and incest are examples that are related to and illustrate Hume's first condition. "To make these general reflections more clear and convincing, we may illustrate them by some particular instances..." (466) What Hume is illustrating in these examples is his contention that we can find no relation that gives rise to moral distinctions. He points out that we do not condemn the oak or elm if it springs up and kills its parent, though we blame the child if he does so. Hume contends that since the relations are the same, then moral distinctions are not founded on demonstrative reasoning. The above reasoning, Hume contends, proves that morality does not consist in relations. These examples also show that
"it consists not in any matter of fact, which can be discovered by
the understanding." (468) The reason I mention these examples in
this place, rather than after Hume's second condition, is because they
have, because of their position in the text, led most commentators
on Hume to misinterpret the paragraph that immediately follows them.
And this is the famous "is-ought" passage, which I shall deal with
at length in the next chapter. The only point I want to make is that
these illustrations should be read with regard to Hume's first con­
sideration, for it is this point that they illustrate, and they
should not be read with the "is-ought" passage, which they do not illus-
strate and which is not directly related to them. The "is-ought"
passage stands disconnected from the main body of section I, as though
we should read it in light of the considerations of section I, we
should not focus our attention on these illustrations of parricide
and incest, lest we be led to misinterpret the "is-ought" passage.

The first condition, then, is that the rationalists must
point out the relation by which we can make moral distinctions, and
this relation, whatever it might be, must lie between internal actions
and external objects. And the examples of parricide and incest il­
strate this condition by showing that where all the relations of two
acts are the same, and yet we judge one immoral and do not condemn
the other, then the relation cannot hold only between external acts,
for then we would have condemn both acts.

We can now take up the second consideration that the rationa­
lists must fulfill in putting forward their view that it is by means
of reason that we distinguish right from wrong. If they could fulfill
the first condition, "it will be still more difficult to fulfill the second condition, requisite to justify this system." (465) The second condition is this: the rationalists must be able to show that if these relations did exist and were perceived, that they would be universally forcible and obligatory.

Tis one thing to know virtue, and another to conform the will to it. In order, therefore, to prove, that the measure of right and wrong are eternal laws, obligatory on every rational mind, tis not sufficient to shew the relations upon which they are founded: We must also point out the connection betwixt the relation and the will; and we must prove that this connection is so necessary, that in every well-disposed mind, it must take place and have its influence; tho' the difference between minds be in other respects immense and infinite. (465)

The meaning of this passage should be sufficiently evident in light of the preceding considerations I have advanced in interpreting Hume. Even if it can be shown by reason that a particular course of action is right, this does not mean we have an obligation to do this act. We are not obligated to do an act just because it is right, according to Hume, if you hold that the rightness of an action is discerned by reason. The reason Hume holds this is that reason, and we are supposing reason apprehends the rightness of an action, can never supply a motive (cause) to action, and, consequently, there is no obligation if there is no motive. The second condition the rationalists have to meet, and Hume believes this is the hardest one for them to meet, is to show that reason can cause actions. He holds that if you hold that it is by means of reason that we have any moral obligations. We have moral obligations only when we have a motive, and since reason can never be a motive to action the rationalists can't show the
relation between their moral perceptions and duty. And this conclusion, I have tried to point out, rests on Hume's mistaken conception of reason as unable to cause actions and his concern for exciting or explanatory reasons. And only in light of this restricted, and mistaken, conception of reason can Hume's arguments make any sense, and only with this in mind can we correctly interpret Hume's whole thesis that reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions.

This chapter has been primarily concerned with the arguments and conclusions of section I, apart from Hume's main argument which was dealt with in Chapters III and IV. I have tried to show that the main body of section I illustrates my contention that Hume is primarily concerned with exciting reasons and the motive power of reason. We have seen that the "original-fact" argument fails to prove that acts cannot be reasonable or unreasonable. I tried to point out a sense in which it is appropriate to speak of actions as being reasonable or unreasonable. We further saw that when Hume does try to point out exactly what role reason does play in morals that his considerations of reason as an oblique cause of actions rested on his concern for causal explanations and his contention that reason cannot supply a motive for action. Finally we saw that Hume's attack against the rationalists culminated with the challenge to show the relation between their moral perceptions and one's duty. And this condition rests upon his belief that reason cannot provide a motive for action, and unless there is a motive there is no moral obligation.
CHAPTER VI

THE "IS-ought" PASSAGE

No discussion of Hume's ethics, and particularly of his considerations of the role of reason in moral decisions, could be considered adequate if it did not take into account the famous "is-ought" passage. It is with this passage that this chapter deals. There are at least two good reasons for devoting a separate chapter to the discussion of this passage. First of all, in the preceding chapter I pointed out how the arguments of section I, those directed against the rationalists, bear out my thesis that Hume is (a) primarily concerned with exciting reasons and disregards justifying reasons, and (b) that he contends that reason is not the source of moral distinctions because reason cannot cause actions. The last chapter further illustrated that 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. All of the arguments of section I rest on these points, and by analyzing these arguments Hume offers against the rationalists I tried to substantiate my arguments of Chapters III and IV. But the "is-ought" passage, though it is in section I, does not, on the face of it, seem to involve these points. The "is-ought" passage seems, to many commentators and ethicists, to make an argument that is obvious
in meaning just from considering the paragraph itself.

Most anti-naturalists, for example, appeal to Hume's "is-ought" passage as the first clear statement of the position that from factual assertions we cannot deduce moral assertions. This passage is, consequently, probably the most quoted passage of Book III. However, what Hume means in this passage is not altogether clear, as I shall point out, and this passage, if we are to understand what Hume meant by it, must be interpreted in light of his previous considerations in section I. I think we will find that Hume is really unaware of the naturalist-anti-naturalist controversy, and intends to say nothing on such an issue.

The second reason for considering this passage at such length is to point out that only when it is interpreted in light of Hume's overall considerations of the place of reason in moral choices can we expect to understand Hume's meaning in the passage, and, what is more, only by considering it in light of his other arguments in the context of section I can we extricate Hume from the inconsistency of putting forward an argument whose conclusion he is the first to violate. Thus, this chapter will be the application of my previous considerations to an ambiguous and unclear passage in Hume, not to illustrate my thesis by the passage, but to show that the passage can be correctly understood only in light of my interpretation of Hume. I shall try to show that by interpreting Hume's position as I have, we remove the apparent inconsistency that arises when he seems to assert that we cannot derive assertions containing 'ought' from assertions containing only 'is' and then he turns around in the very next part of his
work and shows how the moral obligation pertaining to justice and promise keeping arises from certain necessities of human nature.

One further point is worth making. Hume himself disconnects this paragraph from the rest of the considerations in section I. He says, "I cannot forbear adding to these reasonings an observation, which may perhaps, be found of some importance." But we should not be misled into supposing that his statements in the "is-ought" passage are totally disconnected from the main considerations of section I. Surely they are not. And it is in light of these that I shall interpret the passage. For these reasons, then, I believe there is sufficient warrant for devoting a whole chapter to an examination of Hume's meaning in this passage, and it is towards this task that we must now turn our attention.

One of the predominant problems in recent ethical discussions has been that of the relationship between factual knowledge and moral knowledge. It has been argued, on the one hand, that no set of non-moral premises can entail a moral conclusion. Ethical concepts and sentences cannot be reduced to non-ethical concepts or sentences. "This is good" cannot be reduced to "This is pleasant," or "God wills this," etc. This is the position of the anti-naturalists, and one of the chief arguments they bring against the naturalists is derived from Hume. Hare, Prior, and Nowell-Smith all cite with approval the famous "is-ought" passage as establishing the anti-naturalists' thesis. Hume observes in this passage that:
In every system of morality which I have hitherto met with, I have always remarked that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surprized 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 should be observed and explained; and at the same time that 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. (469)

The standard interpretation of the above passage is exemplified in a quote from Nowell-Smith.

Freely translated into modern terminology, what Hume means is this. In all systems of morality we start with certain statements of fact that are not judgements of value or commands; they contain no moral words. They are usually statements about God or about human nature, that is to say about what men are and in fact do. We are then told that because these things are so we ought to act in such a way; the answers to practical questions are deduced or in some other way derived from statements about what is the case. This must be illegitimate reasoning, since the conclusion can contain nothing which is not in the premises.¹

Thus we see that the anti-naturalists find their basic argument in a passage from Hume.

The anti-naturalists have not gone unchallenged. And they have been challenged on several counts. There is, on the one hand, an attack against the use of Hume's "is-ought" passage as expressing the anti-naturalists' argument. There is a question as to whether the

standard interpretation expresses what Hume had in mind in this passage. In a recent controversy over the interpretation of this passage A.C. MacIntyre pointed out that the standard interpretation of Nowell-Smith and Hare, where the major premise must be moral, and the minor factual, if the conclusion is to be moral, supposes that all arguments must be either deductive or defective. Such a position rests on the demand that induction be deduction, which is hard to reconcile with Hume's contention that induction cannot be made deductive. Thus the standard interpretation is inconsistent with other sections of Hume's work. The standard interpretation is also inconsistent with Hume's own sociological and anthropological statements. Hume, if the standard interpretation is correct, appears to have been the first to violate his own prohibition. Hume makes clear, according to MacIntyre, that factual considerations can justify or fail to justify moral rules. "To say that we ought to do something," MacIntyre says of Hume, "is to say there is a commonly accepted rule; and the existence of such a rule presupposes a consensus of opinion as to where our common interest lies." If someone were to show us, factually, that we did not have this common interest, the rules would lose all justification. Thus, MacIntyre points out, the standard interpretation of the "is-ought" passage was first violated by Hume himself. And, lest we

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3 Ibid., p. 457.
consider Hume inconsistent in his own work on this point, we have good reason to suppose that we might have the wrong interpretation of this passage.

If MacIntyre is right about the standard interpretation, then what did Hume mean in the "is-ought" passage? MacIntyre's answer to this question is far from satisfactory. He points out that Hume does not actually say that one cannot pass from an 'is' to an 'ought', but only that "it seems altogether inconceivable" how this can be done. He sees Hume as posing a problem rather than making an assertion. According to MacIntyre, Hume is asking "how and if moral rules may be inferred from factual statements, and in the rest of Book III of the Treatise he provides an answer to his own question." The answer Hume provides, as MacIntyre reads him, is that factual premises cannot entail moral conclusions, but that moral conclusions can be inferred from factual considerations.

Without becoming involved in this last distinction, it can readily be pointed out that MacIntyre's interpretation of the passage is also inconsistent with others of Hume's assertions. First of all, it is very hard to read this passage and see it as a question, or a problem, as MacIntyre does. Hume tells us it is "an observation which may be found of some importance." There seems to be no indication that Hume will succeed where every other system of morality failed. Rather, one gets the impression that Hume will avoid the problem.

\[^4\text{Ibid., p. 461.}\]
altogether and he will not be guilty of the same mistake. As for the phrase "seems altogether inconceivable how this new relation can be a deduction from others. . . ", MacIntyre should find little hope in the "seems", because the next phrase reads " . . . which are entirely different from it". The assertion that these relations are "entirely different" wouldn't lead one to believe that one could be inferred from the other in any shape, fashion, or form. Finally, the last sentence of the passage is overlooked by MacIntyre. Hume tells us explicitly that you cannot derive "ought" assertions from "is" assertions. Hume says that the above observations will"let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relation of objects, nor is perceived by reason."

MacIntyre's interpretation of the "is-ought" passage falls subject to the same kind of criticism he leveled against the standard interpretation,i.e., it is not consistent with other parts of Hume's work. But his first point still remains. There is an apparent inconsistency between the standard interpretation and other things Hume said.

Is it the case that the standard interpretation is correct, or are the other passages believed inconsistent with it really misinterpreted, or is Hume just inconsistent? What does Hume mean in the "is-ought" passage? Can it be interpreted so as to fit in with the rest of his ethics? I believe that the standard interpretation in incorrect, and any interpretation, to be adequate, must be consistent with the main body of Hume's Treatise of Morals. I shall try to point out that the standard interpretation is incorrect because
it misconstrues the problem with which Hume is dealing in section I.

The problem Hume is dealing with here cuts across the naturalist and anti-naturalist controversy. Hume's problem is one of the relation of motivation to obligation. He is saying more than just that conclusions involving 'ought' cannot be derived from premises containing only 'is'. He is saying that conclusions involving 'ought' cannot be derived from premises stating only truths, even if one of these truths is a moral judgment or contains moral terms. This is to say, even if I rationally intuit that "x is right", or "x is good", it does not follow that "I ought to do x". For Hume holds that one has an obligation only if one has a motive or a propensity towards doing this sort of action. Only in light of these considerations does the passage make sense in the context of the *Treatise of Morals*. Let us now consider this interpretation.

There is no reason to suppose the standard interpretation of the "is-ought" passage is incorrect unless it really does lead to an inconsistency in Hume's position. Further, there is no reason to suppose Hume is anything but inconsistent if we cannot interpret his meaning so as to remove the apparent inconsistency. Therefore, I shall first look at Hume's statements on justice which would lead one to suppose that he did derive the 'ought' from the 'is'. Secondly, I shall show that there is an interpretation of the passage that removes the charge of inconsistency, since Hume does violate his own "law" if we interpret him according to the standard interpretation.

I have already pointed out that Hume's discussion of justice and injustice, in fact, the whole of Part II of Book III,
arises because "... no action can be laudable or blameable, without some motives or impelling passions, distinct from the sense of justice." (483) There is no natural motive towards justice and promise keeping, therefore, we either have no obligation or an artificial motive is created that gives rise to an obligation. These are the considerations in section I of Part II.

The two main questions of section II of Part II are: (a) how can we explain the manner in which the rules of justice are established; and (b) what are the reasons that determine us to attribute to the observance or neglect of these duties a moral beauty or deformity. Hume endeavors to explain how "the rules of justice are established by interest." (496) Hume points out that there is a natural obligation to justice, viz., self-interest. We seek to form societies to allow us to fulfill our needs. In order to insure a stability for our possessions we respect certain rules of property, rights, and obligations. Now, self-interest, if you will notice, is the natural obligation, which means it is the original motive for the formation of societies. Self-interest is a non-moral motive to the formation of societies. But this natural obligation is not sufficient for the continued observance of the rules, so a moral obligation arises that attends these actions. Hume's argument, then, is this:

(1) Men are induced originally to the observance of these rules from self interest. This is the original motive.
(2) As society grows men loose sight of this motive.
(3) But we are still affect by justice and injustice when someone performs an action, because their action, by means of sympathy, gives rise to feelings of easiness or uneasiness which are called vice or virtue.
Hume's main concern, as we have seen, is to supply a reason, in terms of a motive or a cause, for the observance of these rules. And he does this by pointing out certain necessities in human nature which give rise to justice and its rules. Finally, by education and by the means if the politicians, we come to morally praise or blame the agent when he does just actions or unjust actions. Hume's account of the origin of justice seems to derive the 'ought' from the 'is'.

Again, in section V, "Of the obligation of promises", we see even more clearly that Hume does derive moral conclusions from factual considerations. It is a bit of a mis-statement to say he derives moral judgments from factual considerations, for Hume never attempts to justify any moral judgments. But he does point out, or attempts to, that our obligation to keep promises is "justified" (i.e., we have a reason for keeping them) because of certain factual considerations about human nature. Consider his argument.

He begins by pointing out that "No action can be required of us as our duty unless there be implanted in human nature some actuating passion or motive, capable of producing the action." (518) And then he points out that the obligation to keep promises is like the obligation of justice.

Promises are Human conventions, founded on the necessities and interests of society. In order to discover these necessities and interests, we must consider the same qualities of human nature, which we have already found to give rise to the preceding laws of society. (519)

Hume's argument concerning the obligation to keep promises runs as follows.
(1) "... experience has taught us, that human affairs would be conducted much more for mutual advantage were certain symbols or signs instituted." (522)
(2) Promises are a "certain form of words... by which we bind ourselves to the performance of any actions." (522)
(3) Therefore we ought to keep promises.

And this is certainly to derive the 'ought' from the 'is', and violates the standard interpretation of the "is-ought" passage. Thus, Hume is either inconsistent, or the interpretation of the passage is incorrect.

If I can put forward an interpretation of this passage that is not inconsistent with Hume's observations about justice and promise keeping, and is, in fact consistent with the rest of his work, it would seem fair to conclude that the standard interpretation is incorrect. Let us now consider such an interpretation.

With regard to the argument cited above, that gives rise to the conclusion "one ought to keep promises", the anti-naturalists would cry "foul". The premise, "we ought to do those actions that are to the mutual advantage", is necessary if the conclusion is to follow from the premises you list. But Hume would believe this unnecessary. The conclusion of the argument does not need to be justified by this additional premise. The reason the additional premise is unnecessary is because the first premise of the argument really states that men are naturally moved to perform actions that are in the mutual interest of society. And this is because they realize it is in their own interest to do so. Hume never intended to supply a justifying reason for keeping promises. He is trying to show the exciting or motive reason for keeping them. He is trying to show how we happen to have a motive for keeping promises, though this arises from the non-
moral motive of self-interest and the necessities of human nature. Therefore, the conclusion, "one ought to keep promises" means that we have a motive to keep promises. And where we have a motive we have a duty or obligation, and where we have no motive we have no obligation. This is the meaning of Hume's argument, and he would be unimpressed by the anti-naturalists retort that it involves a suppressed premise.

How does all this come to bear on the correct interpretation of the "is-ought" passage? I think Hume is saying more in this passage than that moral conclusions cannot be deduced from factual considerations. That 'ought' cannot be derived from 'is' is tied up with Hume's whole notion of obligation and motivation. As we have seen, where there is no motive to do an action of a certain sort there is no obligation. And in his critique of the rationalists we saw that this meant that even if they could show Hume a relation that would give knowledge of right and wrong, still, they would not have shown that the agent was under an obligation to do what was right. This is the second condition the rationalists must meet. They must show that a priori knowledge of right or wrong, even if it be possible, does give rise to a motive in the agent causing him to do actions of this sort. This the rationalists cannot do, according to Hume, because reason can never provide a motive to action. Only the passions have an effect on the will. When Hume ask why I pay my debts or keep promises, the only reason he will accept is a reason that shows that there is a natural motive for doing actions of this sort. That this is the basic position in Hume's Treatise of Morals
I have tried to show. We can also see that he considers it the basic attack the sentimentalists have to direct against the rationalists when in the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* he summarizes the sentimentalists' criticism of the rationalists in the following manner.

The end of all moral speculation is to teach us our duty; and by proper representations of the deformity of vice and beauty of virtue, beget corresponding habits, and engage us to avoid one and embrace the other. But is this ever to be expected from inferences and conclusions of the understanding, which of themselves have no hold of the affections or set in motion the active powers of men? They discover truths: but where the truths which they discover are indifferent and beget no desire or aversion, they can have no influence on conduct or behavior. What is honorable, what is fair, what is becoming, what is noble, what is generous, takes possession of the heart, and animates us to embrace and maintain it. What is intelligible, what is probable, what is true, procures only the cool assent of the understanding; and gratifying a speculative curiosity, puts an end to our researches. (E. 172; underlines mine)

The correct interpretation of the "is-ought" passage is this: from truths alone, even though they be moral truths like those the rationalists claimed to have, we can never derive a moral obligation. To say that "x is right" or "x is good", and supposing that these are truths of reason and not feelings, does not give rise to "Therefore I ought to do x". For, from truths we cannot deduce our obligation because reason is indifferent and can provide us with no reason to do x. Reason can provide us with no motive to do x because reason never causes actions or prevents them. Therefore, moral distinctions are not derived from reason.

The "is-ought" passage, then, is connected with Hume's previous considerations in section I. It is also an argument to make the point that because reason is impotent to cause actions or
to approve or disapprove of things, it is not the source of moral obligation. The "is-ought" passage is connected with the second condition the rationalists have to meet, i.e., they have to show that knowledge of right and wrong can give rise to a motive to action and therefore obligation. This passage is often misread because it is taken out of context and because it is immediately preceded by the observation that moral distinctions are not a product of matter of fact knowledge. But, as I pointed out in the last chapter, these examples that immediately precede the "is-ought" passage are used to illustrate the first condition the rationalists have to meet, which is, that the rationalists cannot point out a relation by which to distinguish right from wrong. The really important arguments of section I are connected with the second condition, and Hume's contention that since morals move us to action, therefore moral distinctions are not derived from reason. It is not by means of truths, even ones containing moral words, that we distinguish vice from virtue, but by an inner sense or a moral sense that causes us to approve or disapprove of an action or praise or blame an agent.

I have concluded my examination of section I of Book III of the Treatise of Morals. The arguments Hume puts forward, and the position he defends with regard to the role of reason in morals, have been examined and criticized at length. That everyone should agree with all the criticisms and all the interpretations I have put forward is more than can be expected. But it seems that Hume's fundamental arguments have been correctly put forward and that the fundamental
assumptions underlying them have been brought to light. Hume has not established his position with regard to the subservience of reason to the passions. I have tried to show that he has come to these conclusions because of his restricted notion of what it means to give a reason for doing an action. It is not enough to ask "what caused him to do that?" or "what motive have I for doing that?" We also ask "Did he do the right thing?" or "What shall I do?" And here we are asking for justifying reasons, and not merely exciting reasons. Hume has disregarded this distinction because he believes that to give a reason means to "tell the cause". The question, "Can reason cause actions?" is a confused question in a discussion of the role of reason in moral decisions. In one sense the answer is no. Reason does not cause us to act. But reasons do influence our conduct, for we seek to take the best course of action in what we do. And the best course of action is that course of action supported by the best reasons. Reason does influence conduct because we seek those ends which we believe we have good reasons for seeking, i.e., they are supported by the best reasons. Hume has in no way successfully shown that reason does not influence conduct and justify ends. I have tried to show that Hume's conception of the role of reason in moral decisions is too restricted and that he is not able to defend his conclusions. There are problems about the limits and uses of reason in moral decisions, and problems about the justification of a moral choice and the role reason plays in this justification. But Hume's problems, and his answers to the question of the role of reason in moral decisions, do not help us to decide issues like these.
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I, Rowland David Broiles, was born in Fort Worth, Texas, February 23, 1938. I received my secondary-school education in the public schools of Fort Worth, and my undergraduate education at Southern Methodist University, which granted me the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1959. I also received my Master of Arts degree from Southern Methodist University in 1960. In September, 1960, I came to The Ohio State University where I specialized in the Department of Philosophy. I held the position of Assistant for two and a half years and received a summer Fellowship in 1961.

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